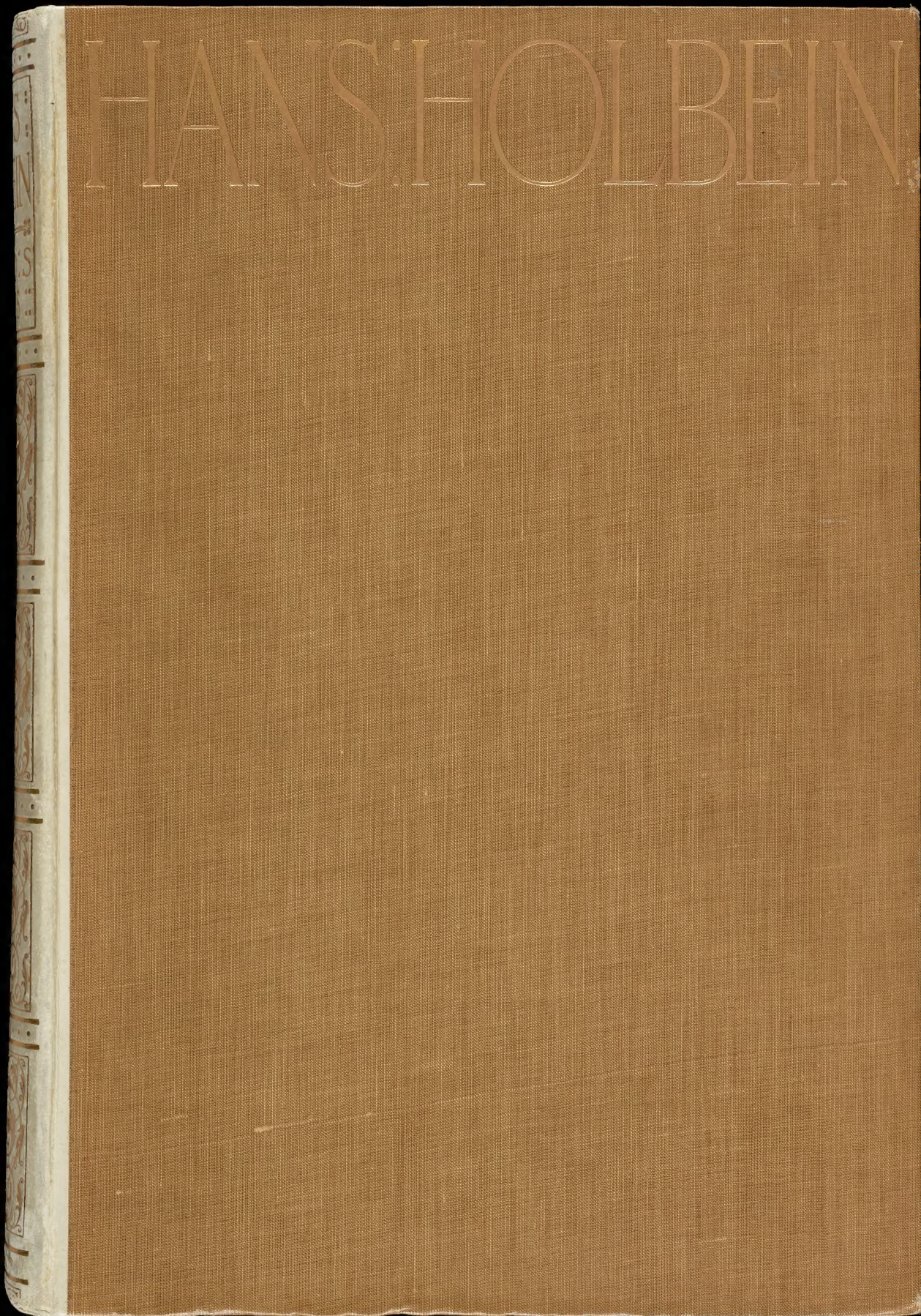
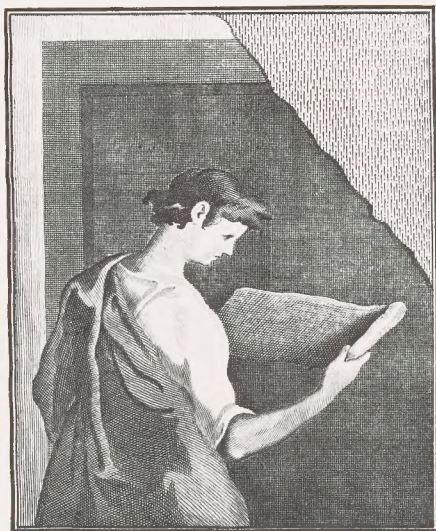


HANS HOLBEIN



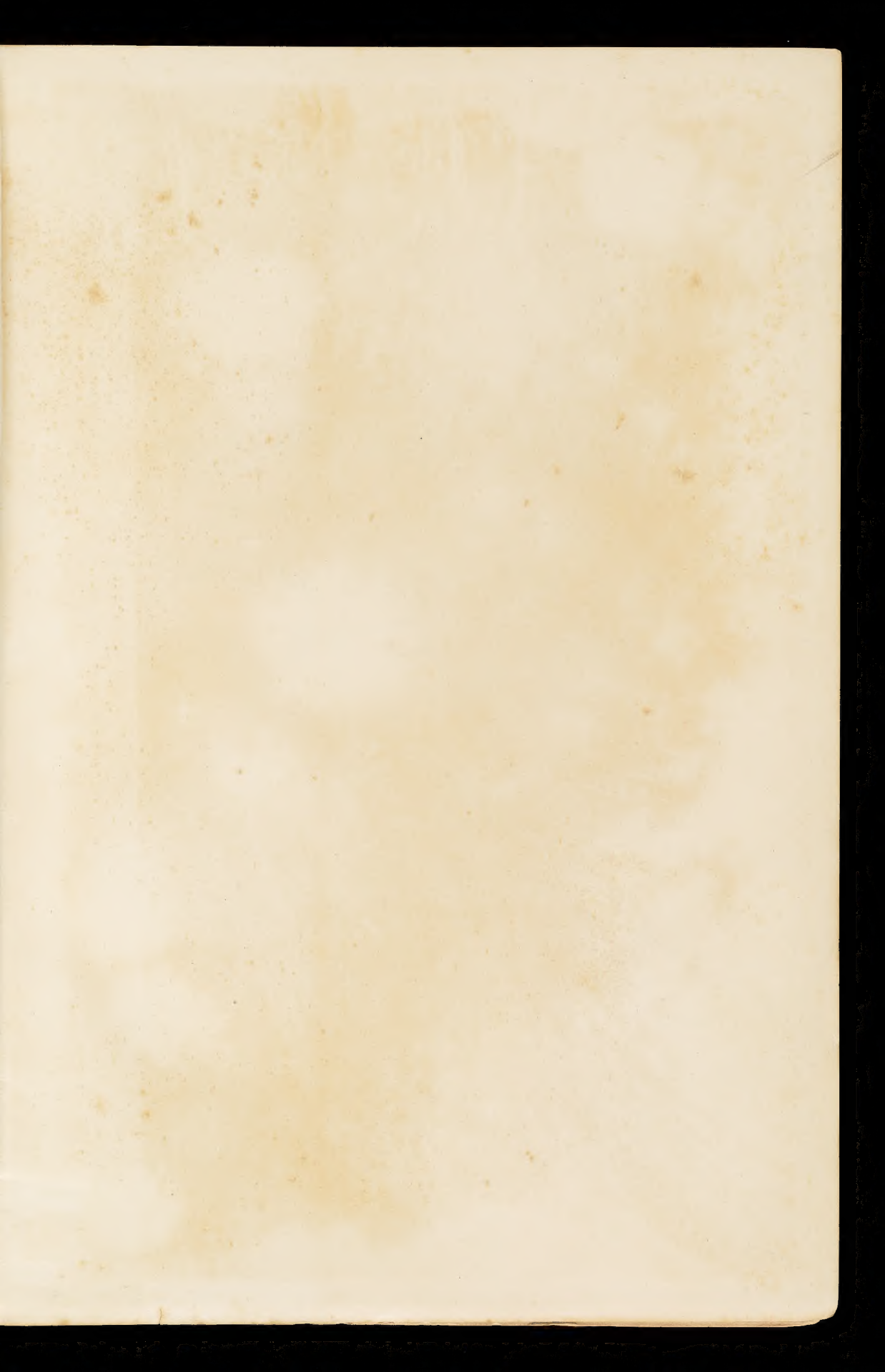
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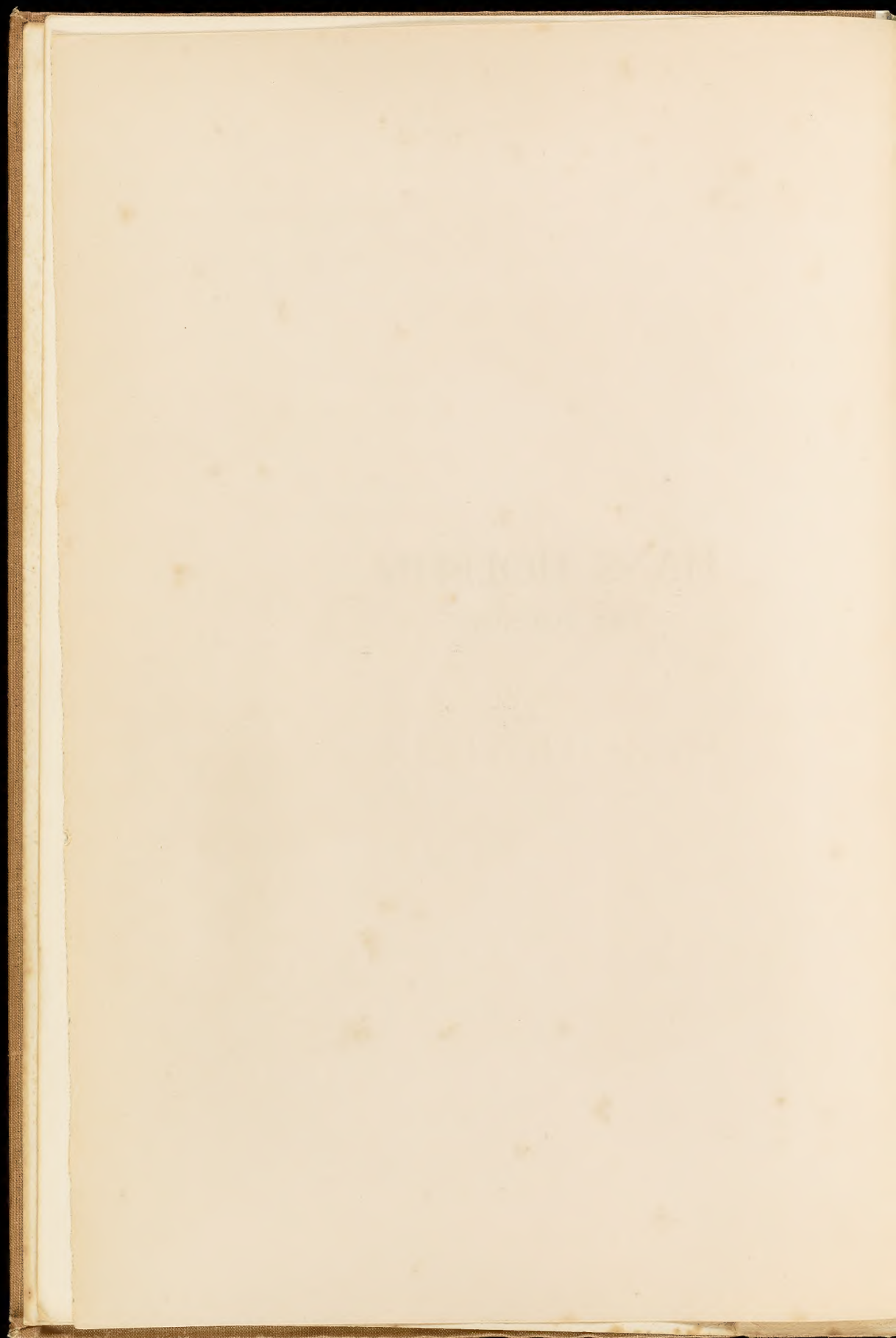
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With the best wishes of

Baron Beckner of Wisbech

25 Dec 1912

HANS HOLBEIN
THE YOUNGER







*Erasmus, 1523.
Longford Castle.*

HANS HOLBEIN

THE YOUNGER

BY
GERALD S. DAVIES, M.A.
AUTHOR OF "FRANS HALS"



LONDON
GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1903

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CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE indulgence with which my monograph on Frans Hals was treated has been a great encouragement to me in attempting the life and work of Hans Holbein the younger, in many respects a far more difficult task. The difficulties, however, are the exact opposite of those which meet the writer in the case of the great Dutchman. In dealing with the work of Hans Holbein the mass of material is very great, though by no means always very trustworthy, nor very valuable. The task becomes one of selection and of omission, and the material which remains unused upon a writer's hands is greater in quantity than that which he is able to employ. I can, therefore, only ask the forbearance of the reader if some of my conclusions seem to be abruptly or arbitrarily stated. It would have swelled this book to thrice its present size if I had in many cases set out at any length the steps in the reasoning by which the conclusions have been reached. That reasoning has often had to be excluded from a book whose pages are necessarily limited.

I have, as the reader will discover, and not, I trust, to his dissatisfaction, omitted from my pages the mass of gossip which has grown up around the life of Holbein, as it has around the life of many other artists. Where such gossip rests on no evidence, and can claim no historic value, I have seen no advantage in inserting it. The ascertained facts of Holbein's life are few: it is not impossible that they may be added to in the future, as in the near past, by the discovery of fresh documentary evidence. Meanwhile, and until such discovery takes place, nothing can be gained by the introduction of tradition, generally childish and often scandalous, which at no time rested on any basis of fact, and which can only be traced back to a date at which all contemporary witnesses had long passed away. The personality of so great an artist as Holbein fascinates the imagination, but a writer has to resist the temptation of building up that personality out of such untrustworthy material. We can realize the artist—though not so

completely as we could wish—through his surviving works. For the man, we must be content to see him in outline only for the present.

The compilation of a list of the genuine existing works of Holbein has been a task of the greatest difficulty, in which I cannot hope to have attained to complete success. No painter has suffered so much from false attributions. No painter has suffered more from the injuries which neglect and restoration produce. There is no man whose original work possesses so intimate an individual flavour as that of Holbein. But there is none from whose work that flavour departs so immediately under restoration and repainting. A work originally by Holbein, when once its exquisite surface has been painted over, presents to the eye few distinguishable differences from an ancient copy similarly treated. The work which lies beneath the restorer's paint may be either one or the other. It is true, indeed, that a considerable number of portraits which bear the name of Holbein may be accepted, even in their ruin, without a moment's doubt. It is also true that an even larger number may be rejected with equal assurance. But there remains a third class, concerning which one can only say that they may have once upon a time been by Holbein, but that the evidences of his handiwork have been overlaid and obscured. I have not, as the reader will find, thought it well to cumber these pages with disquisitions upon the claims of many of these. To have done so would, once again, have swelled this volume to an inordinate size.

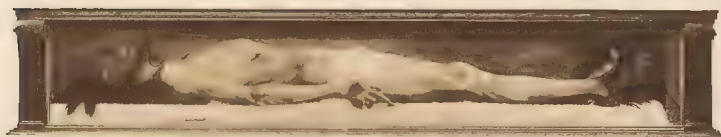
Those who are familiar with the bibliography of Holbein will easily recognize in these pages the extent to which I am indebted to my predecessors. For many of the ascertained facts of Holbein's life, and for the documentary evidence upon which they rest, I have frequently employed the great work of Dr. Woltmann, "*Holbein und seine Zeit*," though, as the reader will find, I am frequently unable to agree with him in critical questions; and I have also found in the pages of Dr. His a few authenticated facts not mentioned, so far as I know, by other writers. I have, of course, consulted the pages of many other writers, especially those of Mr. R. N. Wornum, but I am not conscious of having employed them in such a manner as to need more special acknowledgement. In critical matters I have used my own judgement, and am very well aware how often it will be found open to challenge.

To all who have helped me in my task I tender my most cordial

thanks To His Majesty King Edward VII., and to the gentlemen who have allowed their pictures to be reproduced for this volume, the first place is due in my respectful gratitude. But there are many others at home and abroad who in this way or in that have rendered me assistance, and to whom I wish here to record my debt. Without such aid the work which I have attempted would have been impossible.

GERALD S. DAVIES.

CHARTERHOUSE, 1903.



The Entombment 1524
Basel Museum

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ERRATA

- Page 16, line 18. The name Ambrose should be spelt Ambros.
- Page 30, line 6. The name Elspeth should be spelt Elsbeth.
- Page 35, line 23. *For* "Madame della Seggiola" *read* "Madonna."
- Page 39, line 15. *For* "Bonifacius Amerbach" *read* "Basilus Amerbach."
- On pages 30 and 143, the name Dirk or Derick should be spelt Derich.
- Page 87, line 8 from foot. The Dresden copy of the Meier Madonna has not been reproduced here, and the text must be altered accordingly.

ADDENDA TO THE LIST OF WORKS BY HOLBEIN.

ENGLAND. Mr. Humphry Ward.

SIR ANTHONY WINGFIELD, K.G. Portrait of an elderly man with white beard: right hand raised holding staff of office, left hand holding glove. Black satin close fitting dress; black velvet cloak trimmed with brown fur. Flat cap, collar of the garter: ring on forefinger of right hand with coat of arms.

*In the same ownership is an oil painting probably executed by a follower of Holbein, and bearing the inscription in sixteenth century script "A. Bolyne. 9." It is an exact transcript in oil from Holbein's drawing at Windsor which bears the name of Anne Boleyn (see List of Illustrations).

Quicke Collection, Devonshire.

*Miniature portrait of Sir Thomas More. In black fur-trimmed robe and flat cap. He is wearing the collar of SS and a Tudor Rose pendant therefrom.

HOLLAND. The Queen of Holland's Collection.

*Two very fine miniature portraits of persons unknown.

ITALY. Uffizi Gallery.

*Three miniature portraits.

Pitti Gallery.

*One miniature portrait.

UNITED STATES. New York Metropolitan Museum.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN: supposed to be Cranmer.

* For full description and information as to these see Williamson's forthcoming "History of Portrait Miniatures.



AMBROS AND HANS HOLBEIN

By HANS HOLBEIN THE ELDER

BERLIN PRINT ROOM

HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER

CHAPTER I

GERMAN PAINTING IN THE LAST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

HANS HOLBEIN the younger was born in the city of Augsburg on a day unknown in the year 1497. He died in London during the year 1543.¹ Before we attempt to deal with the facts of the great painter's life it will be of advantage to take a glance at the condition and characteristics of German painting, and especially of Swabian painting, at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.

German painting may be said to have reached its culminating point at about that time. The forty years which went before and the forty years which followed the year 1500 form a period which will be found to include almost all the names which give to Germany its right to a place among the great schools of painting. The list which is appended to this chapter will enable the reader to assure himself of that fact. In it will be found the names of Martin Schongauer, Michael Wohlgemut, Hans Holbein the elder, Bernhardt Strigel, Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Hans Burgkmair, Hans Baldung Grün, Hans Holbein the younger, Christopher Amberger, and others. Remove from this list the two chief names, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Holbein the younger, and we have left to us a little band of admirable artists, whose achievements, if they do not always fascinate the ordinary picture lover, yet always command the respect of the student. They show, indeed, as compared with the Italian schools of the same period, limitations which will always prevent them from being popular in the sense in which the Italian masters are popular. As we pass in one of the great European galleries through some room filled with the works of the early Italian masters we carry away from them a sense of sweetness and of grace compared to which the work of the fifteenth-century German is apt to strike us as harsh and angular. The characteristics, indeed, of the German schools are thoroughness and seriousness. The strong and patient nature of the race comes out in its Art as in all else that it has put its hand to.

¹ Further remarks on both these dates will be found in the chapter which deals with the painter's life.

That Art achieved in the fifteenth century all that can be achieved by laborious earnestness. It lacks, in all save the works of its few greatest masters, that intuitive love of beauty and that spontaneous expression of its presence which no labour and no earnestness can give. Its very defects indeed are, as I shall presently try to show, the outcome of its very excellencies.

For this patient laboriousness led the German in all his art, whether in painting pure and simple, or in the applied arts and handicrafts in which, technically speaking, his skill was unsurpassed even by the Italians themselves, into mistakes from which the instinct of the Italian generally but not always preserved him. It led the German in his conscientious desire for thoroughness of detail to insert often so much of detail as to interfere with the central interest of his picture, and in his desire for truth to insert many a lesser truth at the expense of the greater. It led him also often to overcrowd his subject with figures because, imaginative as he was, he had trained his imagination, as he had trained his natural sight, to see too much. It led him again, in his conscientious desire to give all that demanded from him labour and effort, all therefore that must to his mind be worthy of inclusion because of the labour it cost, to regard many things as worthy to be included which were in reality more worthy to be left out. It led him, therefore, to consent to constrained and even ugly attitudes and action, until presently he began to lose consciousness of their ugliness, which is but another way of saying that he lost some of his sense of beauty. And this toleration of ugliness appears, disappears and reappears in various forms and degrees as we pass from picture to picture by various masters of the German schools, and even from picture to picture by the same master, side by side with the great qualities which produced it, and which, while they may lead us to forgive, cannot enable us to forget. It is the result of a great principle driven to excess, or rather let us say not kept in balance by other great principles which are no less indispensable to art. "Beauty!" said Albrecht Dürer, "I know not what it is." And one of the greatest of the Germans expressed there, as a lesser man would scarcely dare to express it on his own authority, both the greatness and the limitation of the greatness of the German schools.

It may seem strange that one should insist thus at the outset on this feature. That insistence is not due to any want of admiration for the men who were the comrades in art of Dürer and of Holbein, but it is well that it should be set in the forefront of a volume whose aim it will be to show how Holbein, to the very last a German of the Germans, not only preserved and exhibited throughout his art the best characteristics of his nature, but developed them as time went on in such perfection, and withal in such due proportion, that he stands in certain qualities supreme among all who

have ever painted. And to emphasize this characteristic in the first instance is not of course the same thing as to say that sense of beauty was absent from German art. It was present to all the schools, as every student of German art well knows, in varying degrees, and to some in a high degree. In the school of Cologne and in the works of Meister Wilhelm (1338) and of Meister Stephan (Stephan Lochner, 1450) it is present in the highest degree. In the Franconian school, with Nuremberg for its centre, its absence is not always felt. While in the Swabian school, represented by the cities of Ulm and Augsburg, the balance between visionary beauty and realistic ugliness is held upon the whole more evenly; each quality asserting itself from time to time above the other, and each quality at times seeming to be lost for the moment in presence of the other. And in no individual painter was this conflict between the two qualities, or the compromise between them, call it which we will, more completely illustrated than in Hans Holbein the elder, who is in this respect and in others typical of the Swabian school, and of whose work we shall need to make a more special examination in a later chapter.

The older Swabian school had received fresh life and impulse from Martin Schön or Schongauer (1445), whose father, Caspar Schongauer, a goldsmith of Augsburg, had migrated to Kolmar, where Martin was born and received his earliest lessons in art. He went (as it would seem from a letter of Lombard to Vasari) at an early age to work under Roger van der Weyden (Roger de la Pasture, 1400) at Tournai. Under the great Fleming he caught something of his deep and tender inspiration, and something too of the technique of the Flemish school. On his return to Germany he settled at Kolmar and became in no long time the leading teacher of his day. To his studio resorted many of those whose names were presently to become known in art. His pictures are now scarce, and his influence was spread abroad far more through his engravings, which were numerous, than through his paintings. Hibsich Martin, or Hübsch Martin, was the affectionate title by which the great engraver was known in his lifetime, in obvious reference to his name of Schön, but also in kindly allusion to the grace of his line. If we may fully trust the evidence of the little picture of the "Virgin and Child with the Grapes" (No. 1490), which hangs at Vienna in the same room as the "Jane Seymour" of Holbein and the pictures by Dürer, he well deserved the loving title. It is an exquisite little work, hardly less spiritual and less tender than a Memlinc, and hardly less jewel-like in its transparent surface. Of great beauty too is a small "Nativity" which bears his name (No. 174) at Munich. Other pictures in other galleries, however, and especially his larger works, are more hard and dry, but never without a certain grave sweetness and sincerity which belong at once to his Flemish training and to his own artistic nature.

From Martin Schongauer the influence flowed in two channels to the Swabian school, to the western branch of it, which had its settlement at Ulm, through Bartolomaeus Zeitblom (1460?-1518?), probably the pupil and certainly the follower of Martin; to the eastern branch at Augsburg through Hans Burgkmair his pupil, and Hans Holbein the elder (1460?-1521), who is thought also to have studied under the Kolmar master. At this point it will be convenient to say that the school was also influenced by Friedrich Herlen (1445?-1500?), a far less attractive master than Schongauer, who had also been trained in the studio of Roger van der Weyden. We get therefore in the pedigree table of the Swabian school the name of the great Flemish master twice occurring.

In a book which is destined to deal with the art of Hans Holbein the younger it is obvious that there can be no name in the Swabian school of so great interest as that of his father, Hans Holbein the elder; and I have already expressed the intention of devoting part of a later chapter to his painting, which so largely influenced the early career of his greater son. At present I must be content with saying that at the time when he first earned his rank as a leading painter of the Swabian school at Augsburg, that school still in its essentials belonged to the Gothic schools (as they have been called) of the north. But the Swabian school was already beginning to feel the first ripples of the great Renaissance wave. It is, indeed, very often stated in a large and general way that the elder Holbein had very early in his artistic life drunk in the spirit of the Renaissance and been receptive of its influence. I shall presently try to show that he accepted them late in his career rather than early, and with some apparent reluctance and reserve, and that the true and wholehearted recipient and exponent of the Renaissance movement in the Swabian school was another and a stronger, though not a sweeter artist, Hans Burgkmair. That painter stood at the end of the fifteenth century, in the opinion of those of his own day, and before the greatness of Hans Holbein the son had thrown back its reflected light upon the father, as the foremost man of his school. Built both physically and artistically with a stronger fibre and of a stronger grain than the elder Holbein, he can claim a broader, though at times a coarser, outlook upon art than his cotemporary. The readings of the dates of his pictures in the Augsburg Gallery will show that during the last decade of the fifteenth century, and before Burgkmair had made that journey to Italy which was to bring him back a fully equipped Renaissance, his pictures show the details, the classic fronts, the columns, the classical ornaments which went along with the movement. They are indeed but its minor accompaniments, the mere hallmarks of the movement, but they are expressive of the higher facts, as the hallmark itself is of the period of the craftsman. In that same gallery at Augsburg are pictures by Hans



*The Basilica of Sta. Maria Maggiore 1499 by Hans Holbein the Elder
Amstutz Gallery*

Burgkmair painted before the year 1500 which carry that stamp upon them at a time when the pictures painted by the elder Holbein are quite free from it. A little later, indeed, the hand of Burgkmair was to be joined with that of Albrecht Dürer in many great enterprises, and the names of the two artists come into one's thoughts at the mention of the splendours of Maximilian's reign. But that union was the result rather than the cause of the Augsburg painter's tendencies, and if there had been no Dürer and no Maximilian there would have still been a Burgkmair who was the acknowledged leader of the Renaissance movement within the Augsburg school. His name will occur very often in the pages of this book, and it was to his art more than to that of any man save of his own father, that the eyes of the younger Holbein must have been turned in his early days at Augsburg.

Comparative table of a few painters of the early Flemish and German schools, with dates so far as ascertainable.

Wilhelm, Meister von Köln	1338-1378
Hubert van Eyck	1366-1426
Jan van Eyck	1380-1440
Roger van der Weyden (Tournai)	1400-1464
Hans Memlinc	1430-1464
Martin Schön (called Schongauer)	1445-1488
Stefan Lochner (Stefan von Köln)	1450-
Gheraardt David	1460-1523
Hans Holbein the elder	1460-1524
Bernhardt Strigel	1461-1528
Albrecht Dürer	1471-1528
Lucas Cranach the elder (Lucas Müller)	1472-1553
Hans Burgkmair	1473-1531
Hans Baldung Grün (of Gmund, painted at Nuremberg and Strassburg)	1475-1545
Albrecht Altdorfer	1480-1538
Bartolomaeus Zeitblom (of Ulm, pupil of Schongauer)	1485-1518
Hans Holbein the younger	1497-1543
Christopher Amberger (of Augsburg)	1500-1561
Bartel Beham	1502-1540
Martin Schöffner	1508-1541

CHAPTER II

THE CITY OF AUGSBURG

AMONG the great cities, not only of the German States, but of Europe itself, few held a more important place than Augsburg in the days when the two Holbeins, father and son, lived within its walls. It had been for over two hundred years a free imperial city—one of those many in Germany which Machiavelli mentions with such admiration—possessing for its citizens and its magistrates during that period all liberties and rights of self-government, save the power of life and death, and even this had been in the year 1447 given to the municipal magistrates. In the year 1483 a still further strength had been added to the imperial free city by the formation of the Swabian league, whose first purpose had been the maintenance of the general peace and the repression of the disorders which sprang mainly from the turbulent robber knights. But the organization of the trained bands of "Landsknechte" gave to Augsburg the nucleus of a little army which could be used at any time for the purposes of internal defence and for the maintenance of her liberties. They were a sturdy breed, these citizens of Augsburg, and well able to take care of themselves. Once, indeed, when Frederick III., who was possessed of a full share of the mixed magnificence and impecuniosity which he transmitted so faithfully to his descendants, was on the point of leaving the city without paying his debts, the men of Augsburg put in a rough and ready execution on his goods without the aid of a magistrate's order, and held up his carriages and horses till he had given satisfaction. Frederick took it in good part, and was soon back in the pleasant city among his sturdy creditors.

The situation of the town was one of great advantage, and was in no small degree the cause of its prosperity. It stood on high ground at the point from which the two great merchant routes to Italy diverged, the one to westwards by Ulm, Constanze and Basel to Milan, the other eastwards to Venice, and thence to the Levant. It was the greatest depot, therefore, between Upper Germany and the Venetian States for the rich traffic which every year passed north or south from one to the other. It stood far enough away from the great Franconian forest to be out of reach to some extent, though not entirely, of the robber knights whose strongholds in that district proved so often the curse of Nuremberg. Southwards the great and not too fertile plain of the Lech and the Wertach separated it from the nearest

spurs of the Alps, and the very infertility of this plain was not the least of its advantages, since it offered less temptation to the roving adventurer and bred up a sturdy race of peasants who learnt to live in hardness by the sweat of their brow rather than to wait in softness on the bounty of Nature.

Through the city itself coursed the swift waters of the Lech by many channels, which turned the mill-wheels, and moved the armourer's sledge-hammers, and supplied the fountains, and sweetened the streets, and generally ministered to the wealth and pleasure and health of the inhabitants. From a very interesting raised plan of the city which is kept in the Maximilians Museum in Augsburg, I find that in the sixteenth century it had ten gates, most of which are still to be traced together with their uniting walls and ramparts, though some have given way to the march of modern changes.

The plateau on which the city is mainly built has its major axis lying north and south. At the northern end stands the Cathedral with its mighty roofs, while at the southern extremity rises the scarcely less important church of St. Ulric with its now abandoned monastery. Between the two, and dividing the city roughly into two halves, runs the broad Maximiliansstrasse, which, even to-day, is one of the noblest streets in Europe. The raised model of which I have already spoken shows that at any rate up to a late period in the sixteenth century it hardly bore the broad and spacious aspect which it now presents. For a small row of very diminutive houses, whose purpose can only be guessed at—they have the appearance of shops or roofed stalls—are shown as running down the middle. They disappeared probably at the end of the century, when the great fountains were installed in their present position. East of the Maximiliansstrasse, parallel with it and on somewhat lower ground, lay the network of streets which contained the houses and the workshops of the craftsmen who were making the name of Augsburg famous throughout Europe.

The aspect of the city is essentially that of the sixteenth as surely as that of Nuremberg is of the seventeenth century. Augsburg indeed may be said to have her face set towards the modern life, while Nuremberg looks back towards the mediaeval. The narrower streets, the quaint domestic architecture, the grave and endearing homeliness of the Franconian city have given place at Augsburg to the broader and more spacious views of life which came in with the Renaissance. At Nuremberg one seems to see in each house the home of a burgher merchant: at Augsburg one sees in each house the palace of a merchant prince. There were indeed in that day not a few of the princes of Germany who would have been glad to exchange incomes with the Fuggers, the Welsers, the Peutingers of Augsburg. But since that might not be, they were content with borrowing their money,

which, up to the present time, has not in most cases been repaid. The houses of many of these great merchants still look down upon the streets of Augsburg, and though the frescoes which made them gay in the days of Burgkmair and his followers have long since faded and peeled from the house fronts, the fashion has lingered, and modern hands have filled the gaps. The house of the great Fugger family, who rose from the craft of the weaver till they became the bankers, the Medici, of Germany still stands in the Maximiliansstrasse. Conrad Fugger, the founder of the family, had plied the weaver's shuttle, and a hundred years later Anthony Fugger could afford to tear up and restore to him the bond of a prince. One does not grudge to them their wealth in their Maximiliansstrasse Palace if one happens to have just passed through the street of snow-white little cottages in the Fuggerei colony which has done its work so well for close upon 400 years. Jacob Fugger set on foot that first experiment in the housing of the workman in 1519. "*Frugi sed honestis laborantibus*" is the inscription which stands over the little archway which leads into its spotless streets and tidy little alleys. Other houses there are which recall great princely names, and others which recall the names of those who made Augsburg famous for its arts or its crafts or its merchant ventures. And not least in interest among these is the house wherein tradition has it that Hans Holbein the younger was born.

At the time of the younger Holbein's birth, 1497, there was no branch of handicraft or of applied art in which Augsburg had not achieved a very high degree of excellence, and in some cases the very highest. Of her position in painting I have already had to speak and shall have to speak again. Her craftsmen took even higher rank relatively than her artists. Her armourers, her smiths, her goldsmiths were already on a level with those of Nuremberg, and were, before the sixteenth century should have gone by, destined to surpass them in reputation, if not always in the intrinsic qualities of the art.

The armourer family of the Kolmans had migrated from Basel to Augsburg so far back as the year 1377, and from that time forward for nearly two centuries the family never lacked a representative who was fit to fashion the armour of a king. In 1482 Georg Kolman and his more famous son Lorenz were called upon to make a complete set of horse armour for Maximilian, then King of the Holy Roman Empire, and the work proving a masterpiece Lorenz Kolman was in 1490 advanced to the post of Court Armourer. In 1493 he wrought for Maximilian, now become Kaiser, the superb suit of Gothic armour which is to be seen at Vienna, and so satisfied his royal master thereby that the latter not only ordered further suits from him, but was graciously pleased to borrow money of him. It was this same famous Lorenz, who, about 1508, during the boyhood

of our Holbein, was called in by Maximilian to confer with him on the devising of fresh examples of his sumptuous taste. And from their united counsels there resulted the first instances of that fluted armour which has ever since been known to collectors as Maximilian armour. We know of other members of the family, Koloman Kolman, and Desiderius Kolman, and there were many other armourers in Augsburg who, without arriving at the fame of the Kolmans, were yet consummate masters of their craft. It was, indeed, at the end of the fifteenth century that Augsburg gradually succeeded to the supremacy in armoury which had hitherto belonged to Nuremberg. And not only was the skill and workmanship of her armourers and of her locksmiths shown in these princely trappings, but in every article of domestic use from the locks of incomparable beauty which adorned the fronts of their bride-chests, to the pancake tongs which hung in the kitchen, the same high standard of craftsmanship and the same loving delight in the labour of their hands is always to be seen.¹

The goldsmiths of Augsburg, closely allied with the armourers and also with the engravers, and therefore also with the painters, were no less famous, and they too wrested the supremacy from Nuremberg at about the same date as the armourers. Their work was famous in every province of central Europe, and reached, either by the ordinary methods of commerce, or by the special orders of rich connoisseurs, the houses of the wealthy in in such widely separated directions as the Levant, Russia, England, and Spain. It will be necessary to speak of some of the characteristics of German goldsmiths' work when we deal in a later portion of this book with Holbein's designs for handicrafts. It will be enough, therefore, at this point to say that whatever technical skill and faultless craftsmanship can accomplish, was present always in the highest degree in the works of the Augsburg goldsmiths.

The same high standard of excellence was reached in other branches of handicraft—for example, in leatherwork and in textile fabrics. In a country and at a time when all men rode, and when all went bravely accoutred if they could, the saddler and leather-worker was scarcely less important and scarcely less of an artist than the armourer himself,² while the art of the weaver, in a city where the merchants' wives appeared at the pageants in cloth of gold, could claim its position by visible right. Men

¹ The National Museums of Munich and Berlin are rich in the work of the Augsburg smithies. The goldsmiths' work of the city can be studied in the same museums and in the Ambras collection at Vienna, the Green Vaults at Dresden, and in scattered examples all over Europe.

² At Basel, for example, in the Guild "Zum Himmel," the leather-workers were included with the painters and the barbers (barber surgeons, *i.e.* surgeons), though it must be admitted that the inclusion of the bakers in the same guild somewhat discounts the force of the illustration, while it emphasizes the value set on good work in any department.

needed not in Augsburg to be reminded that Conrad Fugger had once sat at the loom. The stuffs of Augsburg went far and wide throughout the cities of Europe side by side with the treasure boxes which carried the goldsmiths' cups.

But there was one more industry in Augsburg which was destined to be very closely identified with the future life and work of our Hans Holbein. In the year 1468, some fourteen years after Gutenberg and Fust had begun to compose the types of their Great Bible at Mainz, Günther Zainer of Reutlingen arrived at Augsburg, and setting up his printing press in the city became its proto-typographer. A year or two later came Johann Baemler and Johann Schüssler, and in 1472 the abbot of St. Ulric and St. Afra, Melchior de Stanheim, set up a printing press in the cloisters of the monastery which was already famous for its noble manuscript library. Other printers known to us by name are Anthony Sorg, 1475, Johann Keller, 1478, and Hans Schobser, 1483. Later came Johann Schöensperger, who was destined to print in 1517 the "Teuerdanck" for Maximilian, which Hans Burgkmair, Beck and Schäußelein illustrated.

By the time that young Holbein's eyes were open to all that was around him the printing presses of Augsburg were in full swing. The early printed books of the city are notable for the abundance of their woodcuts, and their production gave employment to a large number of wood-engravers. Here, however, it must be admitted that the standard of achievement at Augsburg hardly rose to the same level as in the other arts, in the early days, at any rate, of its printing presses. Perhaps the shortcoming was even felt and admitted, since we find that some of the earliest drawings by Burgkmair for the "Teuerdanck" were not immediately cut, but waited for the importation in 1510 of Jobst de Negker, Denecker, or Dienecker, a master craftsman from Flanders, who soon gathered a school of woodcutters and a band of apprentices around him, amongst whom perhaps was Hans Lützelberger (who was afterwards to engrave the "Dance of Death" for Holbein), if the view which some authorities hold be correct, that his birthplace was Augsburg. Be this how it may, it is certain that our painter must have been fully acquainted with all the processes of woodcutting, which he probably saw daily practised by youths of his own standing before he left his native city.

It has been important to dwell thus upon the condition of the handicrafts in the city of Holbein's birth. It may help us to realize the influence of his early surroundings upon a boy of his artistic temperament. Good workmanship was in the air at Augsburg. A man took it in as a child learns its mother tongue, unconsciously and without pedantic rules of grammar. The eighteen first years of life which Holbein spent in Augsburg were to be of determining influence on the career of one who was afterwards

prepared and equipped to paint anything from the portrait of a king to the house-front of a burgher and the table of a dining-room, and to design anything from the chalice of a queen to the dagger of a courtier and the shoe-buckle of a servingman.

We have several times mentioned the Kaiser Maximilian. He is so inseparable from the art life of Germany in his day, and especially from that of his favourite city, Augsburg, that no description of the city in Holbein's youth would be complete without a glance at one of the most fantastic and in some respects one of the most striking figures of his age. Maximilian was perhaps the strangest of all the products of the Renaissance. We know the appearance of the man from Dürer's drawing in the Albertina, and from his painting in the Belvedere at Vienna—a kindly, shrewd, and energetic face, but by no means highly intellectual or of commanding power, or of imaginative force. And yet this was the man who was a dreamer of dreams from his youth, a builder of imaginary empires, a winner of imaginary battles, one, too, who was all his life through carried along by visions of conquest in many other fields, literary, artistic, practical, in each single one of which but one man in a century succeeds in reaching pre-eminence where ten millions fail. He was to be architect, author, designer; to be a leader of armies, a master of statecraft, a pillar of the Church. He dreamed—the thing is almost too fantastic to believe if it were not undoubtedly true—that he might share the papal throne with Julius II., and wield the temporal sword of the Church while Julius held the spiritual. He saw himself always in his visions as a mighty soldier, he wore many and gorgeous suits of armour, and he once won a battle. He believed in himself as a profound and secret diplomatist, but he never knew his own mind for two days together, and his secrecy consisted in never imparting his counsels to those who should have shared them and who might have kept him constant. In his attitude towards the fine arts something of the same character appears. He touched them nearly all, not as a mere patron, but as an amateur in each. He would be an architect, and leaves behind a scheme of which the Chapel at Innsbruck is the outcome. He projects magnificent literary enterprises to illustrate his own life—the “Teuerdanck” and “Weisskunig.” The former, indeed, got itself finished, and survives by reason of Burgkmair's drawings and Schöensperger's printing. The “Weisskunig” romance, which purports to deal allegorically with the Kaiser's career, remained unfinished at his death, in spite of honest efforts, because there was no one left, not even the secretary who did the literary portion, who could say what most of it could possibly mean.

A touch of romance indeed there was visible in all that the Kaiser Maximilian attempted. “The last of the knights” men called him in his own day, and there was certainly something of the knight errant in his com-

position. Every idea, every undertaking of his, had in it something of the magnificent, but always with something of the unpractical. The man himself was a mixture of the magnificent and the commonplace. At Augsburg, where he preferred to live, and had bought himself the house of the Peutingers, he loved to combine the homely, gossipy, fussy life of a retired burgher with the occasional magnificence of an emperor. They liked him well there, for the man had little evil in his nature—"was not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it;" no hero, therefore, to Machiavelli,¹—and they kept him in his place. He danced with the burghers' wives at revels, and he borrowed money of their husbands, and, above all, he gave them every now and then a glorious pageant in which he rode in full armour down Maximiliansstrasse to St. Ulrich, with Maria Bianca at his side. But when, having already established himself in the house of the Peutingers, he tried to buy more houses to increase his royal foothold in the city, he was told he could not have them. He took it good-humouredly, and danced, and gossiped, and paraded as before.

But it would be very ungrateful, as well as very unhistorical, if we were to underrate his services to and his influences upon art. Probably he loved Art, and was interested in it for its own sake, and to say that he used it as a means to enhance his own magnificence is merely to say what is true to some extent of many another patron of art—of Pisistratus and Pericles, of Lorenzo dei Medici and Leo X. Of the impulse which his splendour-loving nature gave to every form of art in Augsburg and elsewhere there can be no doubt. When he rode through the streets in the armour which Lorenz Kolman had wrought, and which Hans Burgkmair had made portraits of, and with the cloth of gold for his housings which a descendant of the Fuggers had woven, men might know that he had paid for none of the three. But there were others in that train, and out of it, who wore armour also and cloth of gold and loved to have their portraits painted. And when he ordered cups of the Augsburg goldsmiths which it needed two men to hold, that he might send them as gifts to royal neighbours, though the debt might never be struck from the goldsmiths' books, orders might yet flow back, and did flow back, from the princely recipients. He was, in fact, to reduce the matter to the vulgar dimensions of the modern commercial view, a gorgeous though unconscious advertisement for the arts which he encouraged. It is with reason and with justice that Augsburg has ever since recorded its gratitude to its imperial burgher by giving his name to its noblest street, down which he rode as emperor and strolled as citizen.

¹ Maximilian is selected by Machiavelli for dissection as one of the standard failures among contemporary rulers.



*The Baptism of St. Paul by Hans Holbein the Elder, 1513.
Augsburg, Museum*

CHAPTER III

THE HOLBEINS IN AUGSBURG

THE first member of the Holbein family in Augsburg whom we can identify was Michel Holbain,¹ who is referred to in one document as a leather-worker, and who is known from the Augsburg register to have lived originally just outside the Kreuzer gate, and later to have moved to that part of the city near to the Maximiliansstrasse, and just below it on the east, which was known as the Diephold, the industrial quarter of the city at that time. It has been thought that the family originally came from Basel, since the name is found in that city at the same date, while another family bearing the same name is known to have lived near Constanx. The fact that one Hans Holbein migrated from his native town of Augsburg, as we shall presently see, to Basel, is appealed to in support of the view that his ancestors had originally come from thence, but there were other inducements of such evident force to lead him to that choice that the argument cannot count for much. Nor is the matter of great importance.

We are only able to speak with certainty of three generations of Holbeins in Augsburg: the first generation having for male representative Michel Holbein, the second having Hans Holbein the elder and his brother Sigmund, and the third Ambrose Holbein and our painter Hans Holbein the younger. It must be mentioned, however, that for some time after Passavant's apparent discovery in 1846, another Hans Holbein, who had to be distinguished as Hans Holbein the grandfather, was interpolated between Michel Holbein and Hans Holbein the elder, thus making four generations instead of three. The reason of this insertion was that on a certain picture signed with the monogram of Hans Holbein there appeared the date of 1459, and it was quite certain that at that date it was impossible that Hans Holbein the elder could have been old enough to paint a picture. The creation, therefore, of another generation was unavoidable if that date was to be accepted. The inscription, however, which read "Hans Holbein. C. A. 1459," was much suspected by critics of weight, and though it held its ground long enough to lead others to attribute further pictures to this imaginary grandfather, it was ultimately proved to be untrustworthy, and

¹ The Augsburg manner of spelling the name is Holbain. The Basel manner, which I have adhered to, is Holbein or Holben.

the date and the grandfather have disappeared together, leaving us in possession of the three generations set forth above.

We have already seen that the craft which Michel Holbein practised was by no means the prosaic industry of to-day, but was in fact an artistic handicraft. The step therefore from leather-worker to painter was not so great as it would be in the present day, and in adopting the profession of painter the two sons of Michel Holbein, Hans and Sigmund, were neither rising nor falling in the social scale, but merely applying themselves to another form of artistic production which seemed likely to suit their special predilections. The wife of Michel Holbein was Anna, and the home, after one or two migrations, was, as we have already said, in the Diephold quarter. The house which Hans Holbein the elder, son of Michel, and father of Hans the younger inherited, and in which our painter was born, is still pointed out, and bears a recording tablet. It is in the Vorderer Lech, No. 496A, a somewhat unfrequented thoroughfare now, but evidently in those days of some importance, as is shown by the fact that Elias Holl, the great architect, chose it for the building of his own house, which, standing a few hundred yards further north, is one of the best specimens of Renaissance work in Augsburg. The Vorderer Lech obtains its name from the fact that a narrow channel of the Lech runs clear and green down one side of the street, separating the roadway from the houses on the north side. Access is gained to these houses in most instances by a wooden bridge or gangway which leads the visitor under an archway in the house itself. The house of the Holbeins, one of those little whitewashed buildings with the comfortable red-tiled roofs which are so plentiful in the city, has nothing to distinguish it beyond the tablet aforesaid. You pass under the arch and find on either side the doors (still retaining their ancient hinges) and the open staircase which leads to the separate tenements into which the house is now divided. Ascending the staircase to the right one finds the little room wherein tradition has it that our Hans Holbein was born, the little kitchen over which his mother presided, and the room which is traditionally regarded as the painting room of Hans Holbein the elder. It looks pleasantly out over inclosed gardens and picturesque roofs up towards the stater buildings that line the Maximiliansstrasse. The house is not luxurious, but may well have been a house of no small comfort in the days when the Holbeins held it.

We have no accurate information as to the birth-date of Hans Holbein the elder. The earlier writers placed it about 1450, but, as Woltmann was the first to point out, this is much too early. He assigns it, in preference, to about 1460. But even this date would seem somewhat early, if the earliest known picture by him of 1490 at all represents the beginning of his output. Thirty years of age was a late time of life at which to paint a

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN

By HANS HOLBEIN THE ELDER

MUNICH PRINT ROOM



first picture. I think, moreover, that his portrait of himself, which he introduced into his picture of "The Basilica of St. Paul," now in the Augsburg Gallery, shows the face of a man who is somewhat younger than is generally thought. I should prefer, though the point is not material to any question of his art, to believe that he was born about 1465.

Of his brother Sigmund it is only necessary to say that he made no mark in Art, and that he left Augsburg for Berne, where he died¹ in 1540, leaving his nephew, "Hans Holbayne," his heir. Hans Holbein the elder needs lengthier notice. He married a lady who is declared by Stetten to have been a daughter of Thomas Burgkmair the painter, and therefore a sister of the more famous Hans Burgkmair. It would be pleasant to accept this. It would at least form a very interesting page in the history of heredity if we could believe that art had been in Hans Holbein's family for two generations on both sides of his descent. It would be easy thus to construct a theory that in the person of our painter the gentler, more sensitive artistic temperament of the father had been reinforced by infusion of the robuster blood of the Burgkmairs. But Stetten's statement has no confirmation so far in documentary evidence; it is possible, indeed, that, though we cannot verify the family of our painter's mother, we know her face and mien as she lived and walked in Augsburg when her two little sons were not yet in their teens. For in the left-hand panel of the father's picture at Augsburg, "The Basilica of St. Paul," there is in the lower foreground a group which has always been considered to represent Hans Holbein the elder, with his two boys Ambros and Hans, while the lady on the left is believed to represent the mother. Concerning the identity of the father and the boys there is practically no doubt, but the identity of the lady with the mother of our Hans is less certain. I am, however, quite inclined to accept the tradition. The father stands on the right of the picture. His hair, parted in the middle, is of an auburn tinge and is worn long, the down-falling locks mixing with a reddish beard. The upper lip is shaven. In front of him stand the two boys, Ambros the elder at his left hand, Hans the younger at his right. The father lays his right hand lovingly on the younger boy's shoulder, while he points to him with his left hand, "guiding his hands wittingly," for it would seem that even at that early age—the boys can hardly have been more than seven and nine years old respectively—the artist father had seen in which of the two little lads the future promise lay. Across the picture to the left the lady, whom we suppose to be the mother, seems to be approaching the others. She is a fine, well set-up figure, but not remarkable for beauty of face, a blonde with pale hazel eyes and plaited golden locks. Her dress is rich and delightful, and as one looks at the gorgeous brocade of her sleeves

¹ His will dated from Berne, but he is thought to have died in Rome.

and the broad gold-lace hem of her skirt, sewn with pearls, one sees that an artist's wife in Augsburg went bravely in those days. The face, as we have said, is not beautiful. I think that a coloured drawing by the father, which is in the print room at Munich, probably represents her some years earlier, and perhaps before her marriage.¹ It is a very charming drawing of a young woman, not of any special beauty beyond that which belongs to every young face which has the sparkle of happy pleasure in the lips and eyes; the hair is partly covered with a white cap, into which some delicate yellow is touched, and she wears yellow sleeves and bands of the same colour across the white chest front. Allowing for some years' difference in age, this may well, I think, be the same person as she who appears in the Augsburg picture. But, whether it be the mother of the great painter or no, it is certainly a study which shows Hans Holbein the elder to have been possessed in some degree of those very qualities in which his son afterwards stood supreme. There is something of the same sympathetic power of seeing, and the same completeness of recording what has been seen, without pedantries and without makeshifts, all that gives to any given human face its charm and its interest. It cannot of course be said that this drawing could be safely set against, for instance, one of the studies by the son at Windsor; but set this drawing of Hans Holbein the elder against any other of those of the most careful and most learned masters of his school and day and he will seem as one born out of due time. There is in it something of inspiration which neither care nor industry nor strength—and there are certainly artists stronger than he—can give. There is in this drawing the germ and something more than the germ of the spirit of his great son.

It was not always so with the work of the father. There are, indeed, many of his drawings which show something of the same spirit in a greater or less degree; for example, a very charming silver-point of a girl looking down with a smile on her face in the Louvre. But out of the whole mass of his drawings, and they are very numerous, quite first-rate examples are rare and his moments of real inspiration exceptional.

We must, however, turn away from this drawing to examine once more the group in his picture at Augsburg. An artist's portrait of himself is not only always very interesting, it is also nearly always very successful. In this portrait group of himself and his family we may fairly suppose that Hans had put out his whole strength, and we may accept his portrait of himself as giving us the outward aspect of the man. It is not a face which bears the stamp of much strength, either intellectual or physical; it is the face rather of a gentle and sensitive man than of a man of very robust and independent intellect. As we seek to account for why an artist of such

¹ There is also a drawing at Dresden in which I am inclined to think I recognize her features.

excellence should presently have to feel the pressure of necessity in such a town as Augsburg, we are tempted to wonder, especially while we are looking at this portrait, whether perhaps he was of those whom nature has endowed with the artistic temperament, but has left out of them the commercial and the combative spirit which enables them to hold their own in the struggle for existence. As one turns from the face of the father to that of the little son, one sees in a moment that the latter is built in a robuster and sturdier mould; he is a big-headed little fellow, with a strong mouth for a child, and a broad skull. The features and shape of the head correspond with the silver-point drawing of Hans Holbein at the age of fourteen, by the side of his brother Ambros, in the print room at Berlin. In this Augsburg picture he is only six years old (the picture having been painted in 1503), if we accept the date of the boy's birth as 1497.¹

The exact date of his birthday was a matter for debate in former years. When Woltmann published in 1868 the first edition of his monumental work, "*Holbein und seine Zeit*," he, after stating the case with great fairness, gave his consent to the year 1495 as correct, on the evidence of a date which had been brought to light on a picture in the Augsburg Gallery. The history of that transaction is so curious as to need some notice. The picture, whose number is 76 in the gallery, is one of four panels from an altar-piece in the convent of St. Catherine in Augsburg. It represents St. Mary and St. Anne with the Holy Child between them, St. Anne holding a book open upon her knees. It will need more special mention presently in connection with the influence of the Renaissance upon the work of the father. In the present connection with the birth-date of the son, it need only be stated that, owing to certain differences of style, various critics, among them Waagen, ascribed it to the son rather than to the father, whose name it had hitherto borne. In 1854 the picture was placed in the hands of a restorer, and it was presently announced that an inscription had been discovered on the book which St. Anne holds, to the following effect: "*Jussu Vener. Pientque Matris Veron. Welser H Holbain æt. suæ XVII.*" The inscription agreed well with the known fact that the series had been painted under commission from Veronica Welser. The statement that the painter was H. Holbain, and that he was seventeen when he painted it, seemed not only to prove Waagen's contention that it was the work of the younger Holbein, but also to carry with it the proof that 1495 must be the date of his birth, since he was seventeen in 1512. Woltmann, after carefully weighing the evidence, accepted the inscription, and so also did Lübke and others. The opponents, however, were not satisfied, and when in 1870, after the death of an official connected with the

¹ He appears again in the Augsburg Gallery, in the left-hand panel of No. 65, as the child who, with obvious delight, is being allowed to help in the distribution of the fishes.

museum, a closer examination was made possible, it was discovered that the inscription was a recent forgery. It was easily removed by the application of a solvent, and the mutilated original inscription was found upon the open book. At about the same time some other inscriptions and documents which had been called in support of the 1495 date were subjected to a more searching scrutiny, and were also proved to be unauthentic. All direct evidence in favour of that date having now disappeared, the supporters of the 1497 date were left in possession of the field. Their case rested mainly on the evidence of the drawing by the father of the boys Ambros and Hans, which carries on it numbers which have been deciphered as 1511 for the date of the drawing and fourteen as the age of Hans. Furthermore, there is in existence an engraving by Vorsterman of a portrait of Holbein giving his age as forty-five in 1543, and a similar date and age on an etching by Wenceslaus Hollar. Woltmann, whose previous summing-up had been of the fairest description, thereupon abandoned his previous position, accepting the date of 1497 as the birth-year of Holbein, in which view he has been generally followed by subsequent authorities.

Having now placed upon the scene the four chief members of the Holbein family in Augsburg, namely, Hans Holbein the elder, his wife, the mother of our painter, Ambros and Hans the younger, we may turn aside to take a brief glance at the work of the father, whose influence was to be so great in shaping the future of the son, merely premising that it is no part of the scope of this book to give a detailed or analyzed account of the works of Hans Holbein the elder, but merely to deal with them so far as they bear upon that influence.

The activity of Hans Holbein the elder as an artist seems to range approximately between 1494 and 1516, for, though his life did not end till 1524, we are not able to trace any authentic work by him after the latter year. In the Augsburg Gallery we have twenty-one works under his name, though four of them are catalogued as *Werkstattbilder*—School works. Four more are in the Cathedral. In the Old Pinakotek at Munich are nineteen, and other specimens are at Ulm, Nuremberg, and elsewhere. They consist almost entirely of altar-pieces, and the subjects are as a rule composed of three or more panels. It is from a study of these that we can get a connected view of the art of the painter.

The impression left upon the mind as we pass from picture to picture in the various galleries where they are now hung is that he was an unequal painter—not merely showing inequality of inspiration, capacity, execution as between picture and picture, but showing often these same inequalities within the framework of one single panel. The upper portions of his pictures, which deal with the more spiritual visions, are often finely conceived, and have about them a certain simple sweetness and sincerity which remind

one of the work of Schongauer, whose influence he certainly shows. It has been supposed, as has been already said, that he obtained his early training in the studio of Schongauer at Kolmar. All that we are able to say on this point, in the absence of any evidence, is that it is not improbable. At the same time, since the influence is mainly apparent in the general type of his madonnas and saints, in the manner of their pose, in the lines and fall of their drapery, and also in the somewhat attenuated cast of the limbs beneath that drapery, rather than in any special peculiarity of handling or of colour, it is evident that the influence may have come to Hans Holbein the father merely from his familiarity with the engravings of Schongauer, which were then widely spread throughout Germany. The point is interesting, but not vital, and is not to be determined. It is of more importance to assure ourselves that the influence, by whatever means imparted, did pass from Schongauer to Hans Holbein the elder. And just as the Kolmar master is thoroughly German both in his virtues and in his defects, so too is the Augsburg master. The keynote of his work is earnestness and thoroughness. He is even too much in earnest, concentrating himself so entirely on each detail and each incident of his crowded subjects, that he loses sight of the artistic unity of the whole—unable, as has happened to many another painter in every age, to see the tree for its leaves. The German primitive, of whom Hans of Augsburg stands in his early days as one of the most admirable types, was at once spiritual and material, fettered and unrestrained, exuberantly imaginative and formally realistic. That very excess of sweetness which we so often see in these Madonnas of theirs, driven to the verge of insipidity, or even beyond that point, to the verge of affectation, was, paradoxical as it may seem at first sight, an outcome of this very spirit of thoroughness and realism. The painter conceives a vision which shall be all sweetness, all purity, all modesty. He will realize each of these qualities to the utmost, therefore, even at the expense of everything else, even though, as the result shows, he ends by losing some of them through their very exaggeration. And so the gentle smile on the Virgin's face is at times driven to something very like a simper, and the downcast modesty of the eyes is carried to the negation of all those other expressions of overflowing womanly tenderness and love, which, never forgotten even by the weakest of the Italian primitives, creates, even in the apparently least real of their conceptions of the Madonna and her Child, a reality that goes home to human sympathies. And if this is so in the school of which the elder Hans is an exponent, still more so is it apparent when he attempts—generally in the lower parts of his pictures, the upper portions being reserved for the Madonna and saints—the representation of purely human scenes, involving movement and action, miracles, processions, martyrdoms. Here commonly to him, as to others of his school, action

means violent action, angular, distorted. Some of these scenes, indeed, represent deeds of violence, such as the execution of a saint or scenes from Our Lord's Passion. This was a brutal scene, says the painter, and he sets himself to realize it in its brutality, by violent and distorted gestures, and by ugliness made visible on the faces and in the forms of the chief actors in the scene. He pursues his end with intensity of purpose, and lets his imagination go as far as it will in search of the sorry sights that the human passions make of men when once they are let loose. He had seen some ugly examples at times in Augsburg and in Nuremberg, no doubt. These are his teachers for this kind, but he will better their instruction. And the result is an exaggeration which fails to impress us because it has gone beyond reality into grotesquerie, and into an ugliness which at once draws our mind away from the moral ugliness of the scene, which is what he intended to convey, to the mere artistic ugliness of ill-drawn limbs and unanatomical action.

These characteristic defects are apparent in varying degrees as we pass from picture to picture by Hans Holbein the father. They largely outweigh the excellences of some of his works (notably in the Passion picture, Augsburg Gallery 61, painted in 1499 for a sister of St. Catherine's Convent); they are strangely alternated with his excellences in the various panels, sixteen in number, from the high altar in the monastery of Kaisheim, Nos. 193-208, Old Pinakotek, Munich, and they are so far outweighed by his excellences in the four panels at Augsburg, Nos. 74-77, of which our plate reproduces one example, that we forget them almost entirely, to remember them once more and to forgive them in the beautiful Martyrdom of St. Sebastian series, 209-10-11 in the Old Pinakotek. I have dwelt thus carefully, and I fear distressingly, on catalogue numbers and galleries, as a careful study of these works in those galleries will alone make it possible to appreciate the painter both in his limitations and his excellences.

As has already been said, the least desirable of his works is a subject in three panels at Augsburg painted for Walburg Föter, a nun of St. Catherine's, who desired it as a pious memorial of herself and her two sisters. So far below his usual standard is it that Woltmann has been led to suggest that its inferiority is due to the extremely low price—26 gulden—which he was to receive for it. No doubt it was impossible for an artist to put into a picture of such size the finished and elaborate work which he would have given for a more liberal recompense. But the form which its inferiority takes is not merely that of rapid and slight execution. A very slight and even very hasty sketch by a great artist, such as might have been in proportion to the poor sum offered, might yet have been, so far as it went, a very desirable work of art. A great painter who is to execute a commission at a very low rate may justly give in return something which does not go

far beyond a sketch. But the sketch may yet be something which so far as it goes is masterly and delightful. He does not keep two kinds of drawing, two classes of inspiration, two types of conception, one of which he lets loose upon his cheaper commissions. And Hans Holbein the elder shows in this St. Catherine's set of panels, besides the rudeness of their execution, a poverty of conception and of design, which cannot be wholly accounted for by the excuse that he was giving back a value in proportion to his receipts. Moreover, in one or two of his other works, where no such reason can be urged, he is hardly more happy. For example, in the Kaisheim series of sixteen panels at Munich already alluded to, several of the subjects are so handled that Woltmann does not hesitate to use about them such epithets as "tasteless and distorted," "horrid and repellent." But while he freely admits this, he proceeds naïvely to rebuke the spectator who shall on that account see reason to disparage Hans the elder, and bids him rather see in it all an evidence of the greatness of Hans the younger, who could rise superior to all these influences. This quaint vicarious praise, though it is quite beyond cavil so far as Hans the younger is concerned, can hardly silence our criticism upon the elder painter.

His best works at Augsburg are the three panels of "The Basilica of St. Paul," of which the left-hand panel contains the group in our reproduction; "The Basilica of Sta. Maria"; and the set of four panels of which we have had to speak in dealing with the forged date on the book which St. Anne holds in one of them. This latter set was painted in 1412, also for the cloister of St. Catherine, and it marks so striking an advance upon any previous picture by him as to amount to a complete change of style, so that one can feel no surprise that the pictures should—all questions of date and chronology being set aside—have been accepted for some years as an early work by his son. The handling is everywhere broader and more simplified; the colours not so harsh, less broken up by contrasts, seen more as one harmonious whole and less as a series of isolated patches. The forms are fuller and less attenuated, and the draperies cast in more massive folds. I say nothing at this point of the architectural setting, with its gilded Renaissance ornament of sphinxes and scrolls. But, merely looking at the feeling and spirit of the picture, one would be tempted to say that Hans the elder must have been to Italy since the years that had passed between his last picture and this, if it were not that his known impecuniosity makes such a supposition wholly improbable. The name of Hans Holbein the younger has long been withdrawn from the pictures, but it is very likely that both the sons, who were now sixteen and fifteen respectively, may have been allowed to help under their father's eye in the accessories of these four pictures, as also a year or two later in the St. Sebastian triptych of 1515 at Munich.

That picture, the last that was painted before the break-up of the

family home at Augsburg, was in like manner for many years attributed to the son, though it has now been for some time restored to the older painter. It is, as we have already suggested, highly probable that the son may have had some share in its production, being now eighteen years old, and, as his work a year or two later at Basel shows us, already a competent craftsman. The St. Sebastian series consist of a large square-shaped central panel and two wings, the latter painted on both sides, so that there are five subjects in all. The central subject is the death of St. Sebastian, and in it once more we see the broader handling, larger drawing, and more comprehensive vision which we have just been noticing. It is as if the painter had suddenly undergone some awakening which had given him full possession of his true artistic nature. The scales seem to have dropped from his eyes. There are still, it is true, tokens that it is the same old Hans. The figure of the crossbowman who, at a yard's distance, and with the contortion which Hans thinks necessary to the action, is screwing up his eyes and taking a most careful aim at the saint's body, comes dangerously near to caricature. On the other hand, the archer on the right, seen in back view, is a figure with some grace of poise and ease of drawing. It is, however, in the side panels that we get once more a glimpse of the peculiar realistic spirit which we shall presently find repeated in the son's early work at Basel. The panels represent St. Barbara, who as the patroness of merchants was in high favour at Augsburg, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The figures are graceful and dignified, and designed with great sense of beauty. The rich brocades of the dresses, the crowns upon the heads of the saints, and indeed all the details of the pictures, are carried out with loving perfection and with a rich and harmonious result. The draperies, though not wholly understood in all parts, for example in the lower folds of St. Elizabeth's dress, are cast in that broader and more dignified set of lines which has now in Hans Holbein the elder's work replaced the minuter and more conventional gracefulness of Schongauer's models. These two panels reach a point of beauty and of achievement far beyond that which appears in any other work by this painter. But it is in one of these, the St. Elizabeth, that there starts up in a strange and almost repulsive form one of those bits of extreme realism which was as yet inseparable from the school. St. Elizabeth is pouring water from an ewer in symbol of the deeds of mercy that flowed from her to the sick and to the miserable. At her knees on either side are three of these stricken creatures, one of whom is holding the little vessel into which the water flows. And Virchow, examining the sores, was able to decide the exact type and stage of the leprosy from which the man is suffering, studied in all accuracy from one of the leper hospitals which Augsburg, like most other cities of the day, possessed. It is not



St. Elizabeth of Hungary

*by Hans Holbein the Elder 1515
Munich, (Pinakothek)*



St. Barbara

possible to turn aside at this point and discuss the question how far this is wise or right in Art, how far the constant presentation to the eyes of pain and loathsomeness—for a picture is as much a constant presentation as the actual visible exposure of the pain or disease in a human being—produces the highest form of pity, and how far it may even produce indifference and hardness. It is not of advantage to discuss just now the bearings of the question either upon morals or upon art. But it is of great advantage to see exactly what attitude Hans Holbein the elder, and with him most of the early German school, adopted in such points. The deeds of St. Elizabeth, says he, were beautiful exactly in proportion as the diseases which she relieved were loathsome and repugnant. Therefore, that you may see her in her full beauty, I shall paint her as beautiful as I can make her—and he does—and the human suffering which she relieved as real as I can paint it. He has a story to tell. He will tell it beautifully if he can, but clearly at all cost. And reticence may mean loss of clearness. Therefore all must be given, even as he had learnt it in the leper-houses of Augsburg. That was evidently still his position when he painted his last great picture in 1515. Before the year was over the Holbeins had left the home in the Vorderer Lech, and Augsburg was to know them no more.

Up to the present I have purposely deferred mention of one branch of his art in which Hans Holbein the elder was not only relatively strongest, but was intrinsically strong, namely portraiture. That this was really his natural bent, and that herein, if fate and circumstance had been favourable, there should have lain his true career, becomes evident to anyone who has examined his pictures at all carefully, and still more to anyone who is acquainted with the series of sketch-book pencillings which are scattered in large numbers among the various cabinets and print rooms of Europe. And it is therefore remarkable that of independent portraiture so very few examples are known from his hand. Of portraits as accessory to and complementary of his large religious pictures—portraits of donors and donor's children, portraits inserted among the actors of his religious scenes—there are very many, and they are generally the most forcible part of his picture, the portion of the work in which the artist was evidently most whole-hearted. But a detached portrait for portrait's sake, such as came in plenty from the hands of Lucas Cranach or Hans Baldung Grün, Bernhardt Strigel or Hans Burgkmair, is almost unknown from his hand. There was no man among all these who was so well equipped as he by natural taste and habits of observation to have given a characteristic and living portrait. And I can only account for this gift of his having been allowed so little opportunity of unfolding itself on the supposition, which I believe to be correct, that Hans Holbein the elder was a painter who never in his lifetime enjoyed real popularity in his native town. He never seems to have made his way into the circle of rich

patrons as Hans Burgkmair and Schäußelein did. Court commissions from Maximilian never came his way, though unhappily the representatives of quite another court, the bailiff's court, too often did. Examine the catalogues of the Munich and Augsburg and Frankfurt Museums, and we shall find that his pictures were commissioned chiefly by monasteries or by religious bodies who paid low, sometimes very low prices. In one instance where the commission is apparently more lucrative, the Kaisheim altar-piece, we find he shared it with the master joiner and the sculptor, the painter by the way being mentioned third in the document. The highest price mentioned as having been paid to him is, I believe, 350 gulden, and for the large triple panel (Augsburg Gallery, 65, 66, 67), which Ulrich Walter caused him to paint to the glory of God and the memory of his two daughters, he received under 55 gulden. This latter picture is specially remarkable for its portraits of the sons and daughters of the donor. In some cases money was held back from the sums due to the artist wherewith to satisfy his debtor's claims. All this seems to point to the conclusion that the painter, perhaps a retiring self-contained man, as I have suggested while we stood looking at his portrait, living in his art and for his art, and lacking the temperament which fits some men to live in two worlds at once, had somehow stood outside of the social influences which brought other men within reach of the golden shower that descended from Maximilian and his court. In no other way can I account for it that a portrait painter of such capacity should have been allowed to employ his talent chiefly on his own sketch books.

Indeed Fortune hardly can be said in this or in other respects to have taken him by the hand. His forte lay in portraiture: it almost certainly lay also in small, concentrated refined work.¹ He was called upon to accept commissions for large religious compositions which needed broader handling, better sense of composition, and more unity of effect than it was quite in him to give.

The sketch books of which we have spoken, or the scattered sheets which once formed his sketch books, are to be found dispersed among the various print rooms of the great European galleries. The drawings, which are mostly in silver-point, number over one hundred, and probably merely represent the few that survived, while the large majority have perished. They have been attributed and re-attributed many times and by different authorities—for example, a considerable number in the Albertina which bore the name of Holbein the younger have been transferred *en bloc* to the father. We have, indeed, in these drawings to deal with three Holbeins, namely, the father and the two sons. And it is obvious that drawings in one and

¹ I should appeal in evidence of this to the little picture in the Germanic Museum at Nuremberg, representing the Madonna and Child crowned by angels.

the same medium stretching over the whole of the artistic life of the father, and embracing also the boyish work of the two sons, give rise to no small confusion. The work of the boys naturally is shaped on the style of the father; the style of the father himself underwent changes. There is rarely any dating to help us, and it is only here and there, where the name of the person represented is given to us, that we obtain evidence that it could only have been the work of the father. For example, a drawing in the Louvre bears on it the name of Alt Ulric Schwarz. This would seem to be the old Ulric Schwartz, the great burgomaster of Augsburg, who paid the penalty for his despotism on the scaffold in 1478. This, then, can only be the work of the father. But in many instances there is no such clue to be had. An endeavour to separate them through their visible differences of style breaks down for the reasons given above. The rough and ready system which seems to have most commended itself to those who have undertaken the task is to assign the best and the broadest in handling to Holbein the younger, the harshest and most wiry to Sigmund Holbein, and the others to Holbein the elder.

The method is, however, full of pitfalls. If indeed the whole collection could be assembled from all the various depositories, and placed for a few months under the scrutiny of a competent authority, it is possible that some trustworthy standard by which the drawings could be assigned might result. At present all that can be said is that it is agreed that the greater number of these sketch-book drawings are by the father, and at least we are able to assign to him with certainty a sufficient number to enable us to say that, though his drawings have never the breadth and completeness of vision which afterwards belonged to the son, yet they are the work of a man who had a keen perception of character and a ready eye to seize the lines of a face which express personality. Under what circumstances or with what intention they were done is not quite certain—probably for his own pleasure and through mere artistic impulse, since in very few cases can any of the portraits be identified with those which appear in his finished pictures. Most interesting are they in the personalities which they bring before us, and which recall to us the men who walked the streets of Augsburg in that day. Jacob Fugger the rich, the same who in 1519 built the colony, the Fuggerei, for working men—*frugi sed honestis laborantibus*—which is still one of the most interesting and picturesque spots in Augsburg; Hans Schwartz, the sculptor in wood; Burckhardt Engelburg, the architect who built the choir of SS. Ulric and Afra; Kunst von Rosen, Maximilian's rough and ready henchman; and Maximilian himself, not in his cloth of gold, but as he rode through the streets on his saddle-horse, with his travelling hood over his head—"the burgomaster of Augsburg," as his enemies scornfully called him; with many another whose identity we cannot even guess at.

Most numerous, perhaps, are the studies of the monks of SS. Ulric and Afra. The monastery lay at ten minutes' distance south of the house of the Holbeins, at the south end of the Maximiliansstrasse. At the back of the church you will find what was once the great cloister of the monastery now become the barracks of a cavalry regiment, while the pleasant walled garden which the raised plan of Augsburg shows us to have been joined to the monastery by a covered bridge across the road, holds the stables of the troop horses. It was here that Abbot Melchior de Stanheim had set up his printing press in 1472. It was here that men of letters, humanists, scientists, artists came for the sake of the splendid library which Maximilian enriched with many a gift. And it was here that Hans Holbein the elder, and doubtless his sons with him, found their models amongst the abbots, the monks, and the lay-brothers. Possibly, too, it was here that young Hans got his stock of Latin from some one of the monks. Be that as it may, the place so links itself with the life of the boy at Augsburg that there are few spots now left in the town where one seems to be able to see him so plainly. Here by the side of the printing presses he must have often seen the first results taken from the wood-blocks which the apprentices brought in for the adornment of the pages of the monastery books. Here he must have come to understand what was needed of the draughtsman who should design a successful block, and here he must have had his young wits quickened by contact with men of all kinds who lived by the use of their brains and the skill of their hands. Fortune was not too kind to Hans Holbein the elder, but she made up in some sort to his son by giving him some of the most favourable surroundings that an artist and a craftsman could have asked for his training ground.

I have already taken exception to a view which is commonly expressed, especially by German writers, to the effect that Hans Holbein the elder was an artist who had early become imbued with the Renaissance spirit and who had kept himself fully in touch with the movement. I have in vain sought for evidence of this in the pictures of the artist himself. Indeed, a careful examination of those pictures with reference to their dates convinces me that, so far from its being true that the painter had thrown himself early and fully into the movement, he had, on the contrary, up to a very late period of his career, held himself back from it, and had clung with an evidently conscious tenacity to the traditions of the primitive German schools.¹ I am able to find no picture by him bearing an earlier date than 1512 (I refer once more to the set of four panels at Augsburg) which bears clear evidence of Renaissance influence, either with

¹ Some of the German writers employ the expression "Gothic style" to describe the primitive German school as opposed to the Renaissance. The term, though not very scientific, has been so frequently used that I continue to employ it.

regard to general style or to the actual presence of classical detail and ornament. His best pictures of about the years 1504-6 show no traces of it. And this fact assumes a greater significance if we turn from his pictures to those of Hans Burgkmair in the Augsburg Gallery. Already, in 1501, we find the work of the latter, through his picture of "The Basilica of St. Peter," permeated with Renaissance influence. He rejoices in the rich accompaniments of classical architecture and classical ornament, and other pictures in the same style follow in succeeding years. The significance of this comparison seems to be this: that Burgkmair and Holbein the elder represented at the opening years of the new century the two different attitudes towards art which for a brief transition period existed within the Swabian school, the former artist cordially sympathizing with the Renaissance spirit, while the latter stood for a time in an attitude of reserve towards it, and accepted it, when he at last did so, as a matter of necessity. And if this view be right, it suggests, I think, a second explanation why an artist of such ability as Hans Holbein the elder failed to hold his own in such a town as Augsburg and ended his life as a bankrupt. The patronage of art in the Swabian capital lay practically in three hands, the Court, the rich merchants, the religious houses. The rich commissions from the first and second of these flowed in upon Burgkmair and his fellows, a poor commission here and there came in to Holbein from the sisters of St. Catherine. It was for Burgkmair to paint the house-fronts of a Fugger or a Peutingger—not that that was a well-paid branch of labour, but it brought fame—with classic processions and symbolic goddesses. It was for him and Schäufelein and Beck to prepare the drawings for the wood-engravers who were to glorify Maximilian in the pages of the "Teuerdanck" or the "Weisskunig." But for Hans Holbein there remained a thirty gulden commission from a poor old nun like Walburg Föter or twice the sum from a devout donor like Ulrich Walther, who got some twenty portraits of his family and household thrown into the bargain. From 1504 onwards the records of the painter's impecuniosity are continuous. Money due upon his pictures is stopped to pay his debts. He is sued for small debts of a florin or two florins, and, after he has left Augsburg, brother Sigmund himself sues him,—let us hope it was in charity to forestall some less merciful creditor—for thirty-four gulden expended in the removal of his studio plant to Isenheim. All this points, as it seems to me, in the same direction. Hans Holbein the elder held a position of respect in his own city as a painter, no doubt, but the commissions went to other men who painted more in the new taste. By the time that he had himself consented to come over to it in 1512 it was too late to recover his position. In 1514 his two boys, Ambros and Hans, left the home at Augsburg to seek their own fortune. The mother apparently was already dead, since we hear nothing about her. The father

stays on to finish the great Saint Sebastian picture in 1515. But even that did not suffice to lift his head above water. A year or so later he is gone to Isenheim, and Sigmund, with or without his thirty-four gulden, has migrated to Berne. There was to be no more painting so far as we know for Hans Holbein the elder, and in 1524 the painter's book at Augsburg records his death.

That which will perhaps strike the reader most in this chapter, which is just at its close, is the fact that though it has brought Hans Holbein the son up to the age of seventeen, and though he must have been then a well-trained and well-equipped artist of power far beyond his years, since a year later he produces at Basel his portraits of Jakob Meier and his wife, which clearly proclaim the fact, yet I have been able to mention no single work which can be accepted without question as an example of his art during these early years at Augsburg, unless indeed it be a drawing or two among the sketch-book leaves already referred to. That some of his work is mingled with that of his father in some of the later pictures by the latter we may, in our minds, feel tolerably satisfied. But to separate with certainty the one portion from the other has taxed the powers of the best critics without successful result and without unanimity of conclusion. That the training which he received in his father's studio was a thorough one admits of no doubt. And thorough training means hard work and plenty of experience. On what work was his hand employed, and where and what were the prentice efforts by which his hand gained its cunning? The absence of all real record either documentary or pictorial is one more of those disappointments which meet us continually as we try to recover the early various strands which presently run together to make the golden thread of some great artist's career. We can fill the blank only by conjecture and by inferences from probabilities. That he worked continuously under his father's eye, and probably on his pictures as he grew older; that he found employment amongst the many printers now settled in Augsburg by making drawings for the wood-engravers; that he learnt his business as a fresco¹ painter by helping in some of the many commissions for house-front decorations which were given to artists at that time; that he took a hand here and there in designs for other branches of applied art, and earned a little pocket money by making pencil portraits of his friends the monks of St. Ulric—each of these suppositions can claim for itself a high probability, which indeed grows almost into certainty when presently we find him at Basel a past master in each of these departments before he is twenty years old.

¹ The word fresco is used throughout the book in the general sense of painting on a wall. I have been unable to ascertain whether Holbein employed the method of true fresco.



*John Traben the Printer
is Engraved to Holburn's Hampton Court*

CHAPTER IV

A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

BEFORE I attempt to deal with the career which lay before Hans Holbein the younger at Basel—whom, for convenience, I shall hereafter call merely Hans Holbein, or Holbein—it will make for future clearness if I devote a very brief chapter to an outline of the known facts of his life. These facts will indeed enlarge themselves and take local colour as we deal with them later in the book in connection with his works; but it is inconvenient for the reader to have to search out the facts and the dates of a painter's life when they are, of necessity, so much mixed up with description and criticism of his art; and this is the more true since it will be necessary from time to time to take some of the pictures, woodcuts, and designs out of their true chronological order for the sake of grouping together certain of his works so that they may be considered side by side.

Holbein was, as we have seen, almost certainly born in the city of Augsburg in the year 1497. He remained there till apparently the year 1514, when, with his elder brother Ambros, he left the family home for Basel, passing through, and probably pausing in Ulm, Constanz and Zurich, and arriving in Basel in the first half of the year 1515. At Basel he and his brother at once obtained work as designers for title-pages, printer's marks, and illustrations for the various printing firms of that city, and, above all others, for John Froben, through whom Holbein made the acquaintance of Erasmus. With the exception of two years, or part of two years, namely, 1517-18, during which he was absent in Lucerne, and amongst other works painted the house-front (destroyed in 1824) of the mayor of Lucerne, Jakob von Hertenstein, he was resident in Basel till 1527, with occasional short journeys to Alsace, Burgundy, and perhaps elsewhere. To this first Basel period belong the greater number of the works which are collected in the museum of the city and one or two important works in other towns. They include the portraits of Jakob Meier¹ and his wife (1516), "The Dead Christ" (1521), "The Madonna of Solothurn" (1522), and "The Meier Madonna of Darmstadt" (1526), the two portraits of Erasmus (in the Louvre and at Longford Castle), and other paintings in oil, besides a very large number of designs for the glass-painter, for the

¹ The name is generally spelt Meyer, after the German method. Upon the whole I have thought it best to preserve the original spelling Meier, as it is found in Fesch's inventory.

woodcutter (including "The Dance of Death"), for the goldsmith, for the armourer; and not a few decorative wall paintings, especially the House of the Dance, all of which have now perished. The decoration of the Rathaus of the city externally and internally with wall paintings, unhappily destroyed, falls within this period. In about 1520 he married his wife, Elspeth Schmid, a widow, and when he left Basel in 1526 he was the father of two children.

He travelled in that year to England with letters of introduction from Erasmus to Sir Thomas More, for whose "Utopia" he had already drawn a title-page, and who was at that moment Lord Chancellor of England.

The painter was kindly received by More, and perhaps spent a short time under his roof at Chelsea, but there is no convincing evidence on this point. He remained in England till 1528. To that first English period belong his drawings and paintings of Sir Thomas More and the members of his family, the paintings of William Warham (Louvre and Lambeth), Sir Harry Guildford (Windsor), John Godsalue (Dresden), Sir Bryan Tuke (Munich), and others.

His second sojourn in Basel lasted from 1528 to 1531, and, probably owing to the disturbed state of the city, which was in the throes of the iconoclastic troubles that for a time paralyzed all other interests, he produced very few works which now remain visible to us. To 1528 apparently belongs the masterly portrait of his wife and two children in Basel Museum. The two remaining internal wall paintings of the Rathaus were completed during this period.

On his return to London in 1532 he settled down in the immediate neighbourhood of the Steelyard, the Hanseatic colony of German merchants in Thames Street, possibly occupying rooms in one of the houses which stood upon the northern end of London Bridge. To this period belong several very fine portraits of the Hanseatic merchants—George Gisze, 1532, now at Berlin; another fine portrait of a merchant, 1533, in the same gallery; Dirk Tybis, 1533 (Vienna), Derick Born (Windsor), and a number of other portraits not connected with the Steelyard, and extending over the years which bring us up to his appointment as King's Painter in 1536.

Between that date and his death in 1543 lie many masterpieces of finished portraiture, a great majority of the Windsor drawings, and a large number of designs for various handicrafts. The portraits of Jane Seymour (Vienna), Henry VIII. (Hardwick Hall cartoon and the Munich drawing), of Christina of Denmark (National Gallery), which involved a journey to Brussels, of Anne of Cleves (Louvre), painted at Castle Düren, the *Sieur de Morette* at Dresden, the Duke of Norfolk, fall, with many others, within this period. Of the actual details of his life we know little



Hans of Antwerp, the Jeweller 1532
Wooler Castle

enough. He was lodged in apartments reserved for the Court painters in Whitehall, and his salary of £25 a year was second in value to that of Lucas Hornebout,¹ a half-forgotten Fleming. The wall paintings with which he decorated the dining hall at Whitehall perished in the great fire which destroyed so large a portion of the palace in 1697. That he was held in high esteem by the king is proved not only by the two commissions in which he was sent abroad in 1538 and 1539 to paint the portraits of Christina and of Anne, but also by a third commission, falling between the two in 1538, whose purpose is not known, which took him to "Haute Burgony," and which gave him the opportunity of a brief visit to Basel. The city council on this occasion endeavoured to retain him for the city, or to induce him to return presently, by an offer of a salary which strikes us as ludicrously inadequate. A form of contract was drawn up in flattering language, and Hans Holbein left them with an assurance of his speedy return. It is indeed quite possible that he may have kept before his eyes the prospect of returning to end his days amongst men of his own speech. But he saw Basel no more. Five years passed and found him still with his hands full of work in England. At the end of that time, in the autumn of 1543, the plague, which was seldom absent from our big seaport towns in those days for many years at a time, had broken out with unusual severity. It is recorded by Stow that in that year the Michaelmas term was adjourned to St. Albans in consequence of the outbreak. In 1861 the will of Hans Holbein was discovered in the archives of St. Paul's Cathedral, and establishes beyond all doubt that the painter died in the parish of St. Andrew's Undershaft in October or November, 1543, and not, as had been always up to that time believed, in 1554. It has been inferred that he died of the plague, and Karel Van Mander (who, however, gives the erroneous date aforesaid) expressly says that this was so. The place of his burial is not known. If the belief that he died of the pestilence is well founded, he would doubtless have been laid in a nameless general grave outside the precincts of the city. The fact that he was no longer living in the apartments at Whitehall is shown, not only by the will, but also by an entry in the rate book of the city of London so far back as 1541, where the painter is charged what is practically an income tax of £3 out of his salary of £30.

The will was executed by his friend John of Antwerp, the celebrated goldsmith for whom Holbein had made designs, and whose portrait, now at Windsor,² he had painted.

The text of the will—which was proved on November 29, 1543—runs as follows :

¹ The name is spelt in several ways—Hornebolt, Hornebaud, etc.

² The identity of this portrait, however, is not quite beyond dispute.

"In the name of God the father, sonne, and holy ghooste, I Johnn Holbeine, servaunte of the Kinges Majestye make this my Testamente and last will, to wyt, that all my goodes shal be sold and also my house, and I will that my debtes be paid to wete fyrst to Mr Anthony, the Kynges servaunte, of Grenwiche, ye summe of ten poundes thurtene shyllinges and sewyne pence sterlinge. And more over I will that he shal be contented for all other thynges betwene hym and me. Item, I do owe unto Mr John of Anwarpe, goldsmythe, sexe pounds sterling, which I will also shal be payd unto him with the fyrste. Item, I bequeythe for the Kyping of my two Chylder wich be at nurse, for every monethe sewyne shyllinges and sexpence sterlynge. In wytnes I have signed and sealed this my testament the VIIth day of October, in the yere of our Lorde God MVCXLIII. Wytnes, Anthoney Snecher, Armerer, Mr John of Anwarpe Goldsmythe before sayd, Olrycke Obynger, Merchaunte and Harry Maynert, paynter."

A note follows to the effect that John Antwerp, executor to the last will of John, alias Hans Holbeine, recently deceased in the parish of St. Andrew Undershafte, appeared before John Coke, Commissary General, on November 29th, 1543, and that the will was admitted.

Holbein left behind him several sons and three daughters, the children of his wife Elspeth, in Basel. Of the sons, whose exact number we do not know, Philip, the eldest, who appears in the portrait group now in Basel Museum, alone assumes for us a clear personality. He became a goldsmith, and was apprenticed to one Jakob in Paris. On his return to Germany he seems to have settled in Augsburg. His son, another Philip Holbein, in 1612 obtained from the Emperor Mathias letters patent permitting him to bear and to amend his ancient and noble coat of arms. This Philip Holbein became the ancestor of the family who, in 1787, were ennobled under the title of "Holbein of Holbeinsberg." Of the daughters it is only needful to say that Künigoldt, who married a miller, became the ancestress of the Merians of Basel, a family which supplied quite a large number of engravers and artists to the world. Elspeth, Holbein's wife, was dead in 1549. His uncle Sigmund had already died in Rome in 1540, leaving our painter all his worldly goods, which were not many. His brother Ambros disappears from knowledge during the painter's first sojourn at Basel, and probably died before he left for England. An illustration,¹ however, to "Das Gantze Neue Testament," dated 1523, printed by Froben, is attributed to Ambros Holbein.

¹ The illustration in question will be found figured in Walter Crane's "Decorative Illustration," London, 1896.



The Virgin & Child. 1511
(the first known work of Hans Holbein)
Basel

1. British Museum, No.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST BASEL PERIOD

AT the end of our third chapter we saw the break-up of the home at Augsburg, and the departure of the two boys, Ambros and Hans, to seek their fortunes on their own account. This must have happened in the fall of the year 1514. Of the details of their journey we know nothing. Their destination was Basel, and they reached it, probably on foot, since the family purse was very empty when they started, and, we may suppose, by way of Ulm, Constanz, and Zurich, pausing for a while in the various towns through which they passed and seeking for small commissions to defray the expenses of the road—working their way, in fact, as they went. Of this we seem to find traces in two works whose date falls in 1514 and 1515, though there were probably more whose existence has been lost sight of. In the museum at Basel there hangs a little picture of a Virgin and Child which was found in private possession at the village of Rickenbach near Constanz about the year 1876. It bears date 1514, and it must be considered the first dated work by our painter, his age at the time of its execution being about seventeen years, and it is most probable that this little picture represents one of the works by which the boy earned his journey money on that eventful passage which was to lead him to his fame. It is a simple and boyish effort, which would, like many another early work by artists who were destined to become great, attract very little attention except when viewed in the light of his later work and the later greatness of its author. Seen through that sympathetic atmosphere this little picture becomes as we look at it a prophecy of the qualities which, grown to their full strength in the matured man, were to make his art what it was. Simplicity, tenderness, and that infinitely loving care and aiming at truth in every detail, together with a certain comprehensiveness of view which prevents the detail from coming first and the main purpose of the picture falling second, these things are there to be seen if they be looked for in this unobtrusive little effort of the boy. The type of the Virgin's face reminds one of the Cologne school. She bends her head to the right, leaning a little over the child on her arm; the forehead is high and large. Pale gold hair streams from under the richer gold of the crown and lies along her shoulder, as in his later great "Madonna of Darmstadt." She has that appearance of a slightly double chin which so often occurs in the Madonnas of the German

school, and is really due to the apple-shaped rounded chin, which gives the appearance of a double chin by the separation which it produces from the flesh of the throat beneath. It is quite unlike the lovely oval of the Italian painters, and it had already become an accepted type with the German schools, and is familiar to us in the Madonnas of Dürer, and notably in his beautiful engraving known as "The Virgin with the Pear." This type had descended to Holbein through the elder Holbein and Schongauer, but already there is in it a stronger individuality than belongs to the work of his father. She wears a white *camicia* with a band across the chest of yellow embroidery, and tight bands of the same around the sleeves, in the German fashion of the day, as we see it in the portrait of Anna Meier, and as it occurs often in the ladies of Lucas Cranach's scenes. The painting of this white *camicia* deserves very careful attention. The separate pleats are traced from top to bottom with scrupulous fidelity, each one kept apart and followed out with as much care as the folds of a Greek archaic statue. There is no losing of the line and finding it again; nothing generalized or summarized anywhere. And a glance at the yellow embroidery tells us the same tale of loving labour. The pattern is followed thread by thread, without any omission, and without any attempt such as the later great portrait painters, Velazquez for example, would have used, at producing the effect by here and there a most carefully wrought passage, suggesting all the rest without painting it out in every inch. That method in the hands of great men, such as Velazquez and Hals, is used with splendid effect. Holbein might have done the same, but he did not; and it is noticeable throughout his whole career that he clung to what one may call perhaps an archaic method, his own early method. If the work of this kind which is to be found in the "Meier Madonna," 1526, the "George Gisze," 1530, the "Jane Seymour," 1537, and the "Anne of Cleves," 1539, be examined, it will be found that Holbein is but using in his full maturity the method of his boyhood, though with added strength and with ripened skill. Here in this first-known work he has already chosen his path. An immature work it is, no doubt, but there is no uncertainty as to what he means to do and how he means to do it.

The colour is pleasant and pure; there is no muddiness of tint anywhere. He uses for his background a deep crimson, which, painted over the white ground, gives a rich transparency. A single bright note is produced by the small patch of pure vermilion on the coat of arms to the right, the arms of a member of the Von Botzheim family, who commissioned the picture; the other coat of arms being that of Ycher von Beringer, his wife. Around two sides and across the top of the frame runs a little border of putti, very exquisitely finished, in an ivory tone on a black ground, the figures at the sides resting among the floriated scrolls of a piece of Renaiss-

ance ornament. Colour effect can never be really conveyed to the senses by verbal description, yet the mere enumeration of the tints employed—white upon black for the border, white camicia upon a very dark green-blue robe for the dress, and the figure itself relieved against a crimson background—will at once assure the reader that the colour scheme consists of contrasts wisely modified, rather than of harmonies richly symphonized. And this choice of colour scheme is characteristic—as we shall have to show later—of Holbein throughout his career.

The tender, natural affection of the little group impresses one immediately. The child, who, it is interesting to observe, has that grave, slightly suffering little face which reappears in all the representations of the Divine Child by Holbein, lies in His mother's arms, the tenderness with which she enfolds her little one being expressed by the subtlest and most sympathetic drawing of the hands, which, though they lack the power of his later work, lack none of its feeling. But a point which I would especially ask attention for is the drawing of the feet of the child. A baby expresses delight more by the movement of its hands and its feet than by its face, and especially does it express joy by an apparently involuntary tucking-up of its legs, and above all by a curling upwards of the big toe. The action is quite invariable in all children, and Holbein has observed it. Now this piece of observation is nothing very extraordinary, nor is it at all confined to Holbein. It occurs in the children of many of the Italian painters—as, for example, in Raphael's "*Madame Della Seggiola*," and in many of Gian Bellini's children—but I recall no instance in which it is quite so truthfully observed and so affectionately rendered as in this little unostentatious work of the boy Holbein, though I can recall several in which it is set forth to us with a greater display of knowledge.

This earliest known work has been worth dwelling on at some length, partly because it is the earliest work, and partly because it contains the germs of the excellences which marked his work long afterwards at its best. It was painted, as we have said, in 1514, probably late in the year, and it seems to tell us of the whereabouts of the wayfarers at that time. And I have no doubt that we are able to mark a further stage in their progress through the painted table now preserved at Zurich. It was known that such a table had existed, but it had been lost sight of until some thirty years ago, when it came to light again, in a much injured condition, and it was amongst the objects which were to be seen at the Holbein Exhibition at Dresden in 1871. It represents the misdeeds of the domestic spirit "*Nobody*," to whom all the mischiefs wrought inside the house and outside are usually assigned. The little scenes are said to have been wrought with no small spirit and humour, and on the surface of the table are a pair of spectacles, letters, etc., painted so as to deceive the eye into the belief that they are real. In one

corner are the arms of Hans Ber and Barbara Brunner, who are known to have been married in June, 1515, and it therefore becomes probable that this table was commissioned as a wedding gift for them. If so, it is probable that it was painted in the early months of 1515, while the two boys were passing through Zurich on their way to Basel, which they probably reached in the spring of that same year.

The choice of Basel as their field of action proved to the two brothers singularly happy. The place enjoyed at that time a reputation such as perhaps no other European city possessed as the home of men of letters. The numerous printing presses which existed there were at once a cause and a result of this gathering together of the learned in the beautiful old Rhineland town. The early printers of Basel, Wensler, Amerbach and Froben had firmly established the fame of the place for the productions of the newly developed art. Scholars and authors came there, partly for the sake of the company of their brethren-in-letters, and partly for the sake of the employment which could be obtained in revising proofs and in preparing editions for the press. It had become to the district lying immediately north of the Alps very much what Venice had become to that which lay south. Hither came, in 1513, Erasmus of Rotterdam to see one or other of his volumes—it was probably the "Adagia" and the "Praise of Folly" and the New Testament which interested him most at that moment—through the press. He had selected Johann or Hans Froben from among the printers of the place, and there had sprung up a firm friendship between these two men which was not to be broken till the death of Froben in 1527. Indeed, though after the year 1515 Erasmus was absent from Basel for a time, he returned again, and finally in 1521 took up his abode with Froben, who then lived in the Fishmarket, as the literary director of the press. Hans Froben was, to judge by the accounts which we have of him, a man of strong and admirable character. Like so many others who led the way in the early days of printing, men to whom all successive generations owe, and always must owe so much, he was at once practical craftsman, man of letters, and publisher. The evidently sincere affection with which Erasmus wrote of him at his death is very strong testimony to the beauty of his nature, coming as it does from one in whom deep affection was hardly a leading trait. The face of the man is known to us from a copy after a portrait by Holbein which hangs at Basel, and again from a portrait at Hampton Court. The latter has not been till recently attributed to Holbein—an excess of modesty which is remarkable in a gallery where no less than twenty-seven pictures have laid claim to that honour. The "Froben" at Hampton Court has suffered by time and restoration and over-painting, and it is difficult to speak with certainty. But it may possibly have been painted by Holbein during the first two years of his residence in Basel. It is

the homely, honest face of a man who lives by and for his work, and it corresponds with what we are told about the man. If he were not worthy of our gratitude for his own work in the printed books which he has left behind him, his memory could never be mentioned without it, since he shares with Erasmus the credit of having helped to place the foot of the young painter on the first step of the ladder of fame.

It is evident that, having arrived at Basel in 1515, the two boys at once sought work from the master-printers, Froben, Adam Petri, Cratander, and Wolff. For all of these they, or at any rate Hans Holbein, executed designs for the title-pages or illustrations of books. But it was evidently Froben who at once saw the value of the treasure which fate had sent him, and who gave to Hans and Ambros the bulk of his employment. We have no means of knowing whether the boys went armed with any letters of commendation. Probably nothing of the sort was required. One drawing on a wood-block carried to Hans Froben would be enough to tell that shrewd judge of his craft what he had got hold of. Be that as it may, we have evidence that Holbein was immediately set to work. The title-page of More's "Utopia," which Froben published in 1518, was cut in the year 1516, while in the following years designs for the same printer's publications follow each other thick and fast. I shall have to refer to these more in detail in a later chapter of the book; at present they need be mentioned only so far as they are inseparable from the development of Holbein's career. But on no account may we pass by one piece of work which came from his hand and through which we obtain a glimpse of his early connection with Erasmus—a connection which was a few years hence to lead to his introduction to Sir Thomas More, and through that to his mighty series of English portraits.

Erasmus had published through Froben in 1514 his first edition of the "*Moriae Encomium*" (The Praise of Folly). It has always been stated that Erasmus wrote this charming satire under the roof of Sir Thomas More—the play on the name of More in the title of the book is of course quite obvious—and even at his suggestion. Erasmus in his dedication of the book to More says nothing of this, but merely states that he wrote it on horseback to beguile the weariness of the way—for Erasmus' eye, like that of many another man whose whole soul is absorbed in social problems, was evidently atrophied to all the interests of Nature and obtained no beguilement thence. His writings show us that he passed through it as one who saw it not. In the museum at Basel there is preserved a copy of the 1514 edition which Holbein has illustrated throughout with marginal drawings in pen and ink, and a note inserted at the beginning of the book states that he did this in the year 1515. Whether he made the drawings at the request of Erasmus, or whether for his own pleasure, cannot be decided with

certainty. I strongly incline to believe in the latter of the alternatives, for several reasons. First of all, the drawings, though full of humour and go, are nevertheless often very slight and also unequal in merit—the drawing of a man amusing himself as he went and jotting down his fancies as each fresh idea tickled him, rather than the set and careful designs of a man who knew that his work was to be seen and criticised by the author. One fancies that if Holbein, who at that moment was to fight his way upwards as a book illustrator, had been asked to illustrate such a book as “The Praise of Folly,” he would have prepared his drawings in such a fashion and in such shapes that they could be employed as permanent illustrations to the volume if required. This is far from being the case. They are of all sorts and sizes, pushed into this space and that of the margin, and sometimes invading the region of the text. That Erasmus saw them is no doubt the fact. At one point of the text, where Erasmus describes himself as a collector of proverbs (*adagia*), Holbein has drawn him sitting at his desk; and in playful revenge Erasmus on the next page has written the name of Holbein over a drawing which the latter had made to illustrate a line containing the quotation, “Epicuri de grege porcus.” It is a drawing of a boorish-looking swain sitting at a table and holding a large flask to his mouth with one hand while the other is round the neck of a girl. It is needless to say that authors have been found who are able on such evidence as this to rest a charge of riotous living against our unfortunate painter. The drawings, however, are interesting on other grounds than the reality which they give to the connection of Holbein with Erasmus. They show us with some certainty that the painter had enough Latin to pick out the wit out of the book. He gets always at the salt of the matter; and it is impossible for anyone who has read the book and seen the illustrations to suppose that the illustrator was dependent on an interpreter. It has indeed been asserted, I believe by Iselin, that Holbein could neither read nor write—an assertion which is at once disproved by the number of written notes, and in an educated hand, which he employed to indicate the future colouring of his chalk studies. The humour of the man, too, comes out, and with, at times, a singularly modern flavour. Thus, when Nicholas de Lyra is referred to, we have the picture of the worthy theologian as he sits over his psalter and painfully grinds out his tune on a small barrel organ. It is a quaint conceit, a bit of fun such as one might look for in the early pages of “Punch” from John Leech or his contemporaries, but one feels of it as if it were almost an anachronism amidst the graver and drier humour of the early sixteenth century. One or two more touches in the same merry spirit are to be found in the volume—very different these from the grim humour which pervades “The Dance of Death” a few years later. But with these few exceptions the keynote of the little drawings is in striking harmony with the

THE BETRAYAL IN THE GARDEN

BASEL



cynical wit and biting satire of the book itself. It is, by the way, interesting to note a fact which has not, I believe, been observed, namely, that in the passage where Zeuxis and Apelles are mentioned, Holbein's drawing of the painter at his easel is undoubtedly meant to be a portrait of himself.

It must not be forgotten that on their arrival in Basel Ambros Holbein as the elder of the brothers by some two years would have been naturally regarded as the owner of the print studio or painting room. He was, indeed, admitted a full member of the guild *Zum Himmel* in the year 1517, whereas Hans did not attain that position till the autumn of 1519. And commissions issued would in some cases be given to the workshop, and would have been carried out by the brothers' combined labour. This seems to have been the case in a very interesting set of five subjects from the Passion of our Lord, which are preserved in the museum of Basel, and carry the numbers in that collection, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The inventory of Bonifacius Amerbach, to whom the bulk of the collection once belonged, expressly says that No. 1, "The Scourging of Christ," was the first picture (not the first woodcut design) executed by Hans Holbein in Basel. The inventory is by no means infallible, as we shall have to show on later occasions, but in this instance there is no reason to doubt its accuracy. Four more pictures evidently belonging to the same series have since been obtained for the collection. The five pictures are done on extremely coarse canvas, and in each case a bulky ill-sewn seam runs irregularly across the middle. In almost all his other works Holbein has used panel. And this fact, coupled with the rough and more hasty handling of the pictures, persuades one that they were, as it is generally assumed, prepared for some special occasion to serve a temporary and not a final purpose. That they were not painted to take their place in a church is proved from their remaining in private hands. If they had been in one of the churches they would almost surely have perished in the general destruction of sacred pictures at the iconoclastic outbreak in the city in 1527. They may, however, very well have been painted as temporary "stations" at some religious festival. And it is important to remember this, and to judge them by that standard. It would be misleading if we were to criticise their technical qualities as if they represented the true level of Holbein's capacities. The commission for their execution was probably given to the pair of brothers, who at that time were wisely ready to earn their bread and strengthen their practice by undertaking anything from the decoration of a palace to the painting of a signboard. It is natural to suppose that with such a commission requiring speedy completion a convenient division of labour would be employed, each brother undertaking a certain number of the pictures. We do not know how many the whole series originally comprised, but if they were "stations" there are several subjects, as, for example, "The Bearing of the

Cross," "The Crucifixion," "The Deposition," which must have been included. A careful examination of these pictures has led me to this result, that Nos. 2, 3, "The Agony in the Garden" and "The Arrest," are wholly by Ambros, while No. 1, "The Scourging," is almost totally by Hans, and No. 4, "Pilate washing his Hands" is wholly by Hans. The view which has been put forward that the pictures were merely executed in great part by the two young men working upon the designs of and as assistants in the studio of some older painter in Basel, does not seem to me to obtain any confirmation either from the probabilities of the case or from any evidence within the pictures themselves. Indeed, there are one or two points which show in the treatment of the incidents and even in certain conventions of colour and representation that the designer of these pictures, Hans or Ambros, or both in union, followed the tradition which they had learned in the studio of their father. For example, in "The Arrest of our Lord" St. Peter is represented in the act of cutting off the ear of Malchus, who lies as he has fallen, his lantern beneath him, while Christ, who is being seized by the soldiers, stretches down His hand to touch the ear and heal the wound. Precisely the same rendering of the incident will be found in a picture of the elder Holbein at Augsburg representing the same scene. Moreover, the younger painters have even followed the traditional set of colours for the dresses of the various apostles which they had seen used by their father. St. Peter, for instance, wears a dark green-blue robe with a white over-cape or blanket, the types of the faces of the apostles being also identical with those in the Augsburg series of Holbein the elder. And if we have to suppose some older master of Basel as the giver of the designs, and the overseer, as one must also presume, of their execution, it is highly improbable that he should have "thrown back" in the case of two of the pictures to the motives and idiosyncrasies of Hans Holbein the father, while in one of them at least, the "Pilate washing his Hands," he as evidently forecasts the manner of the son, who so far had exhibited no work in Basel. And one has to ask who was this unknown Basel painter,¹ or rather what other works are there by any painter known or unknown at Basel at that time which resemble these very powerful although unformed works, which we are to consider. If we are answered that the fact of their having been carried out by the two Holbein brothers so obscured the original designs, motives, and manner that the identity of the older designer has been completely overlaid in the process, and that the work has become practically theirs, one asks in that case where is the necessity for calling into existence this older painter at all? Is he not a somewhat gratuitous assumption? I can, indeed, for my own part, not find any reason, either on the ground of technique or of manner of treatment, for thinking that any

¹ Hans Herbster has been suggested.



PILATE WASHING HIS HANDS

BASEL



portion of the pictures need be attributed to any painter beyond the two brothers Holbein.

"The Scourging of Christ" is indeed a picture of painful, almost terrible realism. The bleeding frame of the Man of Sorrows, bound to the column, writhes in agony under the lashes of the executioner. The body is scarred in every part with the bloodmarks left by the whip. The faces of the men are full of ferocious savagery. Nothing is omitted which can make one realize the cruelty of the scene. It was the young Holbein's aim to do this, and nothing short of this, and he has done it. The scene, he says, was a brutal one. It is my business to show you how brutal: to show you what was the real suffering endured by Him whose visage was marred more than any man's. And he sets himself, therefore, to render every detail as truthfully as he can imagine it, sparing himself nothing of it all.

This I merely say is what Holbein meant to do. Of his success there can be no question in the mind of anyone who has ever stood before the picture. Whether he was right to make that his precise aim is quite another question. At first sight, indeed, there is no escape from the perfectly logical conclusion that since the moral effect of the great sacrifice on the human mind is in proportion to the greatness of the suffering, to the cost, that is, to Him who made it, therefore it is a mere sentimental subterfuge if we seek to avoid, because it causes to us pain or even disgust, the utmost details of the suffering itself. And it is beyond doubt that Holbein is right that a certain amount of our objection to being shown such details is merely aesthetic; that we prefer that they should be withheld because they interfere with our pleasure and break in upon our self-contentment. But there is another view of the case which has already been suggested in the chapter on primitive German art, namely, that the perpetual presentment through pictures of the most distressing details of physical suffering has an effect akin to that which is found to result from the constant presentment of actual pain, torture or deformity. That is to say, that the mind, unable to maintain itself in the perpetual phase of lively emotion, pity, horror and distress, which the first sight of the object produces, is compelled by the virtue of that adapting quality which it possesses, to take up a position in which it can look at such sights comparatively unmoved. No organization could long endure the daily strain of such emotions felt always with ever-renewed intensity. Nature herself comes to the rescue and applies her remedy in the shape of an anaesthetic, under which the sensitiveness to mental pain is gradually numbed. The result upon the majority of men, the finest natures alone excepted, shows itself in varying degrees of indifference down to absolute callousness. And it is a recognized fact that in those countries or districts where the crucifixion is habitually presented to the eyes of the people with the utmost accom-

paniment of physical convulsion and blood—as, for example, in Spain and in the old kingdom of Naples—there is found the greatest amount of indifference to suffering and bloodshed.¹ In short, the conclusion would rather seem to be that the great central facts are not best impressed through the insistence on the most distressing accompaniments, and that the mind realizes better the greater facts when the associated facts are not presented to it with the most distracting realism. The sentiments of pity, gratitude, deep devotion, are, in fact, as most people will have experienced, stirred more deeply by many a representation of the scene which unquestionably has far less of resemblance to the terrible reality, and yet succeeds in presenting the true dignity of the suffering to the mind. There are, to take one example, on the wall of the inner church of San Maurizio at Milan remains of a faded, fast vanishing fresco of “The Mockery,” and another of the “Scourging,” which Bernardino Luini placed there in his grave, gentle, reticent style. The reader who happens to know those works well will be aware of their singularly impressive and enduring effect upon the memory. But Holbein takes the other view, and, taking it, he produces the immediate effect which he aims at, namely, to realize the scene in its utmost horror, with a force and a sincerity which is beyond all dispute.

I am aware that the paragraph which I have just written will lay me open to the charge, which it is always easy to make, of seeming to say that Art should always have a moral purpose, or, as it is often more shortly put, and by all means let us frankly adopt the current phrase, “should preach a sermon.” Nothing can be farther from my belief or from my meaning. But when Art is deliberately made the language in which teaching of any description is to be conveyed, and when the artist places himself in the position of a preacher, as he inevitably does when he selects a religious subject for a directly religious occasion, then it becomes at once the province of criticism to ask how far the purpose has been fulfilled in the most effectual manner by the particular treatment of the theme—how far the sermon has been preached in the best possible way. That Art need not take upon itself any such purpose unless it likes, is an axiom admitted of all men. That it very often elects to do so, and has a perfect right to do so, is equally an axiom. And Holbein cannot be thoroughly understood unless we assure ourselves that he did from first to last paint, not merely as artist of consummate power, but also as thinker, philosopher, preacher, if you will. You cannot look at his work from the same point of view as that from which you may survey the irresponsible Frans Hals or the gay Watteau. To do so is to miss out half the man. I am not concerned at this moment to discuss the

¹ I do not intend to imply that the one directly results from the other; but merely that it is an evidence that no effective feeling of pity and no increased humanity result from the constant presentation of the most painful details to the eye.



THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

BASEL



question whether Holbein or any other artist does well or ill to ally his art to a purpose. All that I here say is that Holbein frequently did so, and that it has been done by many of those whose names stand highest in art, and it is at least as extravagant to say that Art should never have a moral purpose as it is to say that it must never exist without one. Watteau was a great artist; Jean François Millet was a great artist. We do not deny to either the title because the one rarely or never painted with any purpose beyond a delicious colour scheme, or because the other rarely painted without a conscious purpose. Holbein in his early religious works, and above all in his "Dance of Death," deliberately preaches a sermon. But he never allows the artist to obscure the preacher, nor the preacher to obliterate or to weaken the artist.

The technical qualities of the picture, "The Scourging of Christ," which have compelled these remarks, are, as we have said, to be judged in the light of the circumstances under which it seems to have been painted, namely, as a temporary "station" for some religious occasion. The drawing, though not quite faultless, is fine and expressive, the colour (though it has found praise at the hand of German critics) being harsh and unharmonious. The contrasts of crude colour have not in this instance been reduced to any degree of accord. A noticeable detail is the thick, strong outline which Holbein uses, not only around the figure, but even for the edges of his buildings where they strike against the sky. For example, on the right-hand side of the picture the light comes in with considerable strength at the door of the building. Yet down the edges of the brickwork where it meets the sky, and where, therefore, the highest light would naturally fall, there runs a strong brown line. This convention, though it contradicts a truth which in later days has been entirely recognized, belonged to the older schools, and had been inherited from them. Probably, in the case of one who worked so much as Holbein for the wood-engravers, it was an unalterable convention, which at that time his observation had not enabled him to overcome. He uses it in a much modified degree in his later days, but to the very last he never entirely abandoned it, surrounding his figures, and even the side of a face nearest to the light, with an exceedingly fine, often almost invisible line. He never arrived at the practice, which was to be reserved for the great masters of a later century, whereby modelling, relief, the detachment of figures and faces from their surroundings, and also the fusing of them with their surroundings by means of the play of light upon them and of the presence of atmosphere around them, were to be absolutely rendered. Holbein is a superb artist in the old methods, and in spite of them; but he did not, as has sometimes been said of him, inaugurate the modern method.

By far the finest of this early series, both in colour and achievement,

is the other example which I have already claimed for the hand of Holbein alone, namely, "Pilate washing his Hands." On the other hand, it is less vivid than they in its power of expression. Pilate, in the conventional Eastern turban and headdress, is not a very convincing figure as he washes his hands and turns away with an hypocritical air from Christ, who is being led away by, or rather driven in front of the executioner. This latter figure is evidently given us in the garb of the time—he was an official who was only too often to be studied in the cities of Europe of that day—and his hideous dress and uncouth appearance are set as a foil to the gentle and submissive figure of the Saviour. At the foot of Pilate's dais stands an attendant clad in the yellow and black uniform such as was worn probably by a Landsknecht out of armour. He holds the basin and ewer with which Pilate washes his hands, and he is the finest figure in the group both in drawing and in colour. The details of the picture are wrought with care, remarkable care indeed, considering the roughness of the materials and the nature of the work. They show evidences of the painter's astonishing power, already much developed, of rendering all objects with a fidelity which goes as far as it is possible to go in the direction of actual reality, and yet stops short of the stage at which the vulgarity of mere deception is arrived at. The power which he here shows over his mere accessories—look, for example, at the rendering of the marble steps of the judgement throne on which Pilate's seat is placed—is the same power which is to find its culmination in later years in the "George Gisze" and "The Ambassadors," a power which, surprising as it is in some of its manifestations, is always subordinated to the greater interests, the human interests and the dramatic interests of his picture.

To the first year of Holbein's sojourn in Basel belongs an interesting panel, now sawn in two to show both sides, which he painted as a sign-board for a schoolmaster. It was of no great size, and must have once projected in front of the pedagogue's door at no great height above the eye, since the lettering is small and the two little scenes beneath are not visible at a great distance. The inscriptions on the two sides, alike in both instances, announce on behalf of the owner of the board to man, maid, or child that he is prepared to teach all comers the art of reading and writing—in the case of adults payment to be by results, and any persons proving incapable of learning to read or write are to be discharged free of cost. Beneath these alluring notices are the two little scenes, in one of which the master and his wife are seen teaching the children, while in the other the men, squaring the elbows and stooping the back, are seen endeavouring to acquire the mysterious arts. These two little interiors are painted with something of the affectionate pleasure of a seventeenth-century Dutchman. It is evident, indeed, that not only was Holbein ready to accept any commission which



Jakob Meier
Basel Museum

z. H. 1511. 1512. 1513.

came to him, but that he was ready to do his best by it, and ready to do nothing short of that. And his reward came to him less in the shape of the gulden that flowed in from it, for they were few enough, than in the splendid practice which he obtained by it.

There are several more pictures in the Basel Gallery which belong to these same years, the head of a St. John, the head of the Virgin wearing a crown, and an Adam and Eve on one panel, all of them small pictures, and either wholly or partially retouched, though not recently, so that they need not detain us, especially as we have from the year 1516 an example to examine which at once places him on its own merits amongst the leading portrait painters of any age.

The painter's connection with Hans Froben and with Erasmus brought him doubtless into touch with many of the leading men of Basel. Amongst these was Jakob Meier, known, according to the custom of the day and place, as "Zum Hasen," from the sign of the house next to the town hall in which he lived. He had been elected burgomaster in 1516, and he held the office year after year till 1521. In religion he was a staunch adherent of the old Catholic party, but the question as yet had not burnt to that white heat in Basel which it was to reach a few years later, and a man could still belong to the old Catholic party and yet be in thorough sympathy with the moral, intellectual and social reform within the Church for which men of the mind of Erasmus and Sir Thomas More were eager.

In politics he belonged to the popular or democratic party in the city, being indeed the first burgomaster of Basel who was not of noble birth, and it was during his term of office that the stringent ordinances were passed by the city council whereby the powers and privileges of the nobles were curtailed, and by one of which the bishops were debarred from entering the council. A few years later, in 1521, when the gap had grown wider between the old Catholics and the Reformers, the hostile party in the council procured his downfall on a charge, whose truth it is now impossible to estimate, of having accepted a larger pension or fee from the King of France as a reward for the supply of mercenary soldiers than the law permitted. He never returned to office, and after the iconoclastic troubles in Basel in 1527 the decree by which he was debarred from office was made final. Before that time had come, however, he had linked his name permanently with that of Holbein by giving him the commission, apparently in 1526, for the "Meier Madonna" now at Darmstadt.

But in 1516 no such troubles seemed to lie before the new burgomaster of Basel and the young wife, Dorothea Kannengiesser, whom he had not long married. It was probably in celebration of this event that he gave to Hans Holbein the commission to paint the portraits of himself and of his wife. They hang together in one frame at Basel in the room where the oil

paintings of the master are collected, while the preliminary drawings in chalk are amongst the sketches in the adjoining gallery.

Holbein is now about nineteen years old. Scarcely two years have passed since he left his home an unknown artist, whose promise seems to have so far escaped the notice of his fellow-townsmen in a great art centre such as Augsburg, that no indisputable work from his young hand was preserved there, and that he was allowed, for lack of opportunity, to go in search of a living elsewhere. A young journeyman, not old enough yet to take his place with his fellow painters, bakers, and leatherworkers in the guild "Zum Himmel" at Basel, meanwhile comes before us in this pair of portraits as a fully accomplished artist, complete in his power of vision, complete in his grasp of character, completely assured of his methods and technique, no longer feeling his way as a beginner, but self-possessed, unhesitating, in a word, a Master. He is already Holbein—young Holbein, perhaps, but lacking no single element of the greatness of the future man. He was to paint indeed stronger, more striking portraits than these hereafter—portraits in which every quality of his genius should receive greater emphasis. But each and all of these superb qualities is already here. Holbein is here in them already of full stature, though not of full maturity. He is here in these portraits of Jakob Meier and his wife completely the man who was to paint the "George Gisze," the "Christina of Denmark," the "Sieur de Morette." The difference is one of degree only. No principle of seeing, of interpreting, of recording—the three essentials of portrait painting which he uses here—were ever laid aside by him, as some artists are compelled as they go forward to lay aside the visions of their youth; they are in Holbein's case hardly even modified, merely intensified.

Each of the portraits is painted in three-quarter face, the wife turning to her right, the husband to his left. Jakob Meier wears a black loose upper robe with an open white front, gold embroidered, and on his head a scarlet cap. He holds in his hand a gold piece, in token, no doubt, that in his first year of office the city had received from Maximilian the privilege of minting its own gold coins. He is a dark-eyed, brown-haired, ruddy-complexioned man, in whose burly face are shown shrewd humour and common sense, together with a certain look of earnestness which we find again in it ten years later as he kneels before the Madonna in the great picture. The background is filled with classical columns and arches which bear bronze-gold Renaissance decoration, such as Holbein always loved to paint. A patch of bright blue sky is shown through the opening and is set behind the scarlet cap—a bold venture in colour, but perfectly successful and free from all crudeness—once more, indeed, a happy reconciliation of contrasts. Dorothea Kannengeisser is an even more delightful portrait. She wears a white and gold cap of the shape which appears so often in that day in the costumes of a burgher's



Loretta Kunninggessa, 1546
Basel

J. B. Bach, Basel

STUDY FOR DOROTHEA KANNENGIESSER

BASEL



wife; I am not acquainted with the technical name for it. Her boddice is a deep crimson with black bands and beautifully rendered embroidery across the chest. The painting of this detail is as masterly as anything which he accomplished at any time, and in handling it very much reminds one of the work which is to be seen in his subsequent portrait of Anne of Cleves. But here again, consummate as the painting of detail is, it is to the face of the person that we are at once attracted. She was not a beautiful woman, but she had an interesting expression, and was, with her clear fresh German complexion and her strong type of face, pleasant to look at, and the ideal of a burgomaster's wife. The colour of the picture, as so often happens in a woman's portrait, is greatly helped by the accidents of the costume, by the whites and golds of the headdress, by the delicious richnesses of the embroidery and the clear and brilliant flesh tones. Against these is set the bright blue of the sky behind, and the whole forms a delicate and charming colour scheme.

The drawings are hardly less delightful and hardly less complete than the finished paintings. One may even say that they suggest colour, as every genuine drawing by Holbein always does, with hardly less clearness to the understanding, though of course with less sensuous delight to the eye. As a piece of character reading the two drawings strike one as even more satisfactory than the paintings, and this is especially so in the case of the wife. They are, as indeed any drawing of Holbein which I have seen never fails to be, quite convincing. One feels no doubt that one has before one the actual man or woman as they did indeed live and look on that day when Holbein looked into their faces. His power of grasping all that there was to grasp in the man's inward character and in his outward expression of it immediately, completely, is of the nature of second sight—an extra sense bestowed on Holbein, and never in a like degree on any other.

The achievement of such a pair of portraits would, one might have thought, have been immediately followed by commissions from the burghers of Basel and their wives. The absence of other portraits of that year or of the two years immediately following does not bear out the expectation, and the fact that next year, 1517, he left Basel to undertake work at Lucerne seems rather to suggest that the former city was no gold mine to an artist. The many designs for handicrafts which are preserved from the hand of Holbein during the entire period of his first sojourn at Basel, 1515-1527, show that a certain amount of employment was to be had by an artist of such capacity as Holbein, who was willing to work for printer or armourer, goldsmith or bookbinder, without reserve. But such work was probably very poorly paid. The larger commissions, for painted portraits and for pictures, were evidently scarce, since the whole output of painted pictures during the eleven years of his Basel period is not large if we may consider,

as it seems certain that we may, that we possess a great proportion of it. No doubt in his connection with Froben and the other printers of Basel Holbein already had a source of income which to some extent protected him from want. But Lucerne was sufficiently near to Basel to allow him to continue his work for the wood-engravers without serious interruption. At all events, it is quite evident that Basel did not offer inducements enough to prevent his migrating for a while to a neighbouring city. It is not probable that he undertook that migration without a direct promise of work, and such a promise seems to suggest itself in the commission which we at once find him engaged upon on his arrival in Lucerne in 1517, namely, the painting of the façade and interior of the house of Jakob von Hertenstein, a leading citizen of Lucerne, who had been mayor of the city a year or two before, and who in 1515 had begun the building of a new house for himself, and now intrusted Holbein with its decoration.

CHAPTER VI

WALL PAINTINGS

WE have several times in the earlier chapters of this book had to refer to the taste for the external decoration of houses with wall paintings and coloured ornament, which prevailed largely amongst the southern cities of Germany, and perhaps nowhere more than in Augsburg itself. There perhaps Holbein served his apprenticeship to the art, or at any rate saw enough of its technicalities to have learnt all that was required for it. The practice was so universal that there can have been but few intervals during which there was not some work or other of the kind going on in his native city. The work was evidently not very highly paid in Germany, nor yet apparently very highly esteemed, if we may judge by the deprecatory tone of the contract, already alluded to, which the municipality of Basel tried to draw up with Holbein in 1538. The preamble sets forth that they, the council, quite realize that Holbein's art is of far too great value to be spent upon the decoration of "old walls and houses," and the council had been showing, and were continuing to show, the sincerity of their belief by allowing the works which Holbein had painted on the walls of their town hall to go to total decay. But though the pay was small, hardly so great, even allowing for the difference in purchasing value of money, as would now be paid to a house-painter for his "three coats throughout," yet it was often undertaken by artists of repute, as, for example, by Dürer at Nuremberg, Burgkmair at Augsburg, and Tobias Stimmer at Schaffhausen. The delight of having a large surface to decorate more than compensated the true artist through the opportunity it gave him of expressing his colour sense on a broad scale. None of these external works by the great artists of Germany are left for us to see. The life of a wall painting exposed to the action of the weather was, even in the climate of Italy, not a very long one, and north of the Alps it could hope for but a very short span. One is therefore surprised that the paintings which Holbein executed in 1517 on the façade of the Hertenstein house at Lucerne should have still been in existence in 1824, in which year, incredible as it now seems to us, the house, in spite of strong remonstrance, was swept away with all Holbein's paintings, by its owner, a banker named Knörr. Indeed, the hand of fate has fallen heavily on all Holbein's work of this description. All that he did at Lucerne, at Basel, and in London, has perished. Work of this sort has

indeed three chief enemies—Time, Accident, and the hand of Man, and all these three forces seem to have combined against Holbein. The house at Lucerne was pulled down while its paintings were still sufficiently preserved for copies to be made of them. The House of the Dance and other houses in Basel had already been demolished in the previous century. The decorations in the Rathaus of Basel perished through neglect. His wall paintings at Whitehall disappeared in the fire which in 1697 destroyed the great part of the palace. "The Triumph of Poverty" and "The Triumph of Riches," which had adorned the Guild Hall of the Steelyard, were allowed to pass out of knowledge. No single work remains (though a few small fragments are preserved here and there) which will enable us to form any opinion as to the colour scheme and general effect of Holbein's work in this material, and under conditions that call out qualities for the possession of which easel pictures afford no guarantee. How interesting it would have been if we had possessed even one great decorative work by Holbein which we could have set for comparison side by side with Mantegna's "Triumph of Caesar." The few small preliminary studies which have survived from Holbein's own hand do not afford the evidence which we require. The somewhat more numerous copies on a small scale by other hands, often executed when the wall paintings themselves were far advanced in age, and often handled, moreover, in a manner which tells us that we have in them the designs of Holbein seen through the eye of a not very accurate, though very dull copyist, give us perhaps even less safe ground for attempting to decide what the colour effect seen on a large scale really would have been. In a book which is devoted to the work of Holbein, it is impossible to omit some kind of description of these works, but it is equally impossible not to feel the very unsatisfactory nature of the investigation.

An important street in one of the cities of South Germany or Switzerland in the sixteenth century must have been a pleasant thing to the eye of a passer-by with its gaily painted house-fronts. This outward expression of the joy of living, which was the keynote of the Renaissance as it affected the individual and the citizen, was no mere outcome of the spirit of ostentation or pride of wealth. Those motives doubtless influenced many, as they have done at all times and do to-day. Yet for the majority it was no more the spirit of ostentation which led them to make the outsides of their houses pleasant for the eyes of others as well as their own, than it is in the case of many men of our day, who mark their love of their home by making it as beautiful as they can. In the sixteenth century Art still looked outward to the street rather than inwards on the four walls of a room. It was, especially in the free cities of Germany and Switzerland, a manifestation of that communal spirit by which each burgher as a matter of course, and with hardly a consciousness of any set purpose in the matter, did his part towards

making his city beautiful and pleasant to dwell in, not for himself alone, but for all who shared its life with him. That was the spirit of that day and of that social condition. The modern spirit has changed with changed conditions. If one who lives in one of our towns will have his house-front pleasant to look upon he does it because he likes it, and hardly because he has any sense of duty towards the commune. Conversely, if he choose to destroy that which is beautiful and which has given pleasure to others, he does not recognize any interest in that question beyond his own. The beautifying of cities and towns must be left to the municipalities, he says: it is a matter for the rates and taxes. The private individual in modern life recognizes in very rare instances that he has it in him to contribute to or to subtract from the joy of life to others.

And we find, therefore, that the burgher of Ulm or Augsburg, of Basel or Lucerne, so soon as he could afford it, rejoiced to add to the brightness and the interest of his town by making his house-front pleasant. In the sixteenth century and in that part of Europe it took the form of surface painting, just as in the towns of Northern Germany, in Osnaburg, for example, it took the form of gaily-painted wood carving. If in having one's house-front painted one could hit on a Burgkmair or a Holbein, and he could be had for the price, all the better; if not, then the best that could be got. In some cases, indeed, the house was to be painted inside as well, especially if it happened to be for one who was a mayor in prospect or in fact, and civic hospitalities might be expected. But as a rule the paintings seem to have been confined to the front of the house—scriptural subjects, classical subjects, incidents with a fine moral from the "*Gesta Romanorum*," gods and goddesses, virtues personified, merrymakings, scenes of sport, and the inevitable complement of garlands and festoons, gryphons and sphinxes, pilasters and capitals—a strangely mixed assemblage of subjects, no doubt, but offering a perpetual interest to the passer-by. It was, indeed, a cheap picture gallery offered to those who could afford no pictures for themselves. The poorest might see though he could not possess. Now he can neither see nor possess. And the public spirit which was in the main involved, even though it was mixed at times with less admirable motives, helped to develop the true communal sense—the feeling in men that the streets of a city somehow belonged to them, and they might take a pride in them. At all times this feeling has been stronger in continental cities than in our own; even to-day the characteristic survives, and the home of the people seems to be in their own streets, and they are more at home in them than is the case in our own towns.

Therefore, though there was little reward in proportion to the labour from these house-painting commissions, yet the circumstances were inspiring to an artist, and to one who preferred fame to money, and work to

both, they offered opportunities which were not otherwise to be found. One may feel pretty sure that most artists who undertook those tasks did their best with them, since they were to spend their existence, however short that might be, in full view of a generation of critics who were in their rough way not the worst of judges on such matters. To Holbein, indeed, as to some other artists, such as the Van Eycks or Dürer, it was a constitutional impossibility to do less than his best. And Holbein's best by the year 1517 had already shown itself to be very good. Alas! that when we have said this we have said all that can really guide us to an opinion as to the quality of the work which Holbein did on this his first recorded experiment in the task of outdoor decoration on a large scale.

On the façade the subjects which we know of were *Leaena* before her Athenian judges, on the occasion when she bit out her tongue rather than witness against her lover *Aristogeiton*, and *Tarquin* with *Lucretia*, both of them having reference, though somewhat obscurely, to the administration and the perversion of justice.

In the interior of the house he painted on one large wall the *Vision of the fourteen saints* who had appeared, according to tradition, to a poor shepherd of Bamberg, 1445, a vision whose fame was great at that moment in South Germany. On another wall he painted seven saints above, with the figures of the donor and his family below, while a third wall held a triumphal procession. In the great hall, or hunting hall, which is said to have been still quite complete at the time of its destruction, he painted amongst other frescoes the *Fountain of perpetual youth*, a very favourite subject at that date, which *Lucas Cranach* and *Altdorfer* and others had already handled. The date, 1517, appeared on a portion of this painting.

For one of these, for the *Leaena* before the Judges, the original sketch exists at Basel, while for the *Vision of the fourteen saints*, for the *Seven Saints* with donors, and for the *Fountain of youth*, besides fragments which still survived in other rooms of the house, copies were made, but unfortunately of a very poor and inadequate description, before the house was swept away in 1824. But it can hardly seem profitable to spend much time in attempting to reconstruct these works from the evidence of copies which give an untrustworthy idea of the design, and none at all of the colour scheme and final effect. Yet, as we read of the shepherd and the fourteen saints, and again of the seven saints with the donor's family, our thoughts naturally turn to the *Madonnas* of *Solothurn* and of *Darmstadt*, painted not many years later, and we cannot but argue through these latter works that these were achievements in which Holbein would have been likely to have been seen at his best, since they needed something of the same spirit and offered something of the same opportunities as those surviving masterpieces. It is, indeed, impossible to estimate the loss to our knowledge of

Holbein's art which was inflicted by the unhappy destruction of the Hertenstein house.

It will be convenient, in spite of the slight violation of chronological order which must result, to mention here the wall paintings which Holbein executed at Basel after his return thither in 1517. It is probable that he decorated not a few houses there, since the words of the Basel Council in 1538, already quoted, in which they deprecated the waste of his talent on the painting of old walls and houses, could hardly have been used if two examples only of such work existed in Basel. But of two only at the present day are we able to gather any particulars, namely, the House of the Dance (Haus zum Tanz), probably painted in about 1520, and the wall paintings of the Rathaus in 1521-2; one or two original sketches and designs by Holbein himself still exist, and some copies were also made by other hands, as in the case of the Lucerne paintings before the destruction of the originals.

The House of the Dance, destroyed in 1779, stood in the Eisengasse near the Great Bridge. In the decoration of its front and sides Holbein must have departed from the principles by which he seems still, to a great extent, to have limited himself in the earlier work at Lucerne. For, whereas in the Hertenstein house he dealt, so far as we can judge, with the façade as a flat surface, treating it as a great space to be decorated with pictures, and (except where he once allowed the spectator's eye to penetrate to an imaginary interior) merely adapting his design to the windows, doors, and architectural features, so as to avoid ugly interference from them, in this House of the Dance he abandoned this method and adopted a style of decoration by which the whole façade was turned into a museum of architectural illusions, paint being made to do what architecture alone should have done. That is to say, that the building being in the old Swiss style with an arcade of pointed arches, he deliberately transformed the whole into a Renaissance front, employing columns, architraves, cornices and festoons, and concealing the existing features by dexterously using them to produce the effect of an architectural style which was not their own. And he even went so far as to select a certain point of view from which it should be compulsory to look at the house if the spectator was to obtain the full effect of these perspective contrivances and optical illusions with which he had amused the eye. This point of view seems to have been opposite to the angle formed by the front and side of the house. And it follows from this, that if viewed from any other point, it would fail to give its effect, and therefore fail as a piece of decoration.

On the lowest plane Holbein had painted the side of the house so as to give the effect of stables with a horse and groom seen inside over a low wall, while nearer to the angle came a painted portal which let the eye pass

to a staircase painted within it. Higher up in the front the pointed arches of the façade were falsified by round arches painted about them in such a way as to make them appear to be the mere result of the intersection of the groining of the interior. And in doing this Holbein obliterates an existing Gothic feature, and endeavours to replace it by a Renaissance feature. Above this row of arches came a flat band which he utilized for his painted frieze of peasants dancing wildly to the music of the bagpipes. This vigorous and exhilarating bit of realism it was which gave the name to the house, and was evidently the feature of the whole. Above this came a series of gods and goddesses amidst painted pilasters on the flat spaces between the windows of the second storey, and above this again a balcony which was made to seem as if it carried men and ladies who looked down into the street. Higher still came medallions, and yet higher grotesque ornaments and Renaissance floriations; while the topmost storey of all was painted to resemble battlements and turrets. Perhaps, if we had to state the general principle which governed the whole treatment, we should be reduced to saying that it consisted mainly of making everything look like something else.

It will be seen from this that Holbein in the Haus zum Tanz deliberately gave himself over to methods which contradict some of the first principles which should limit the decoration of flat surfaces in colour. He does not ask you to look at a flat surface which you recognize as such, and on which an artist has painted his picture with as frank an acceptance of the circumstances as if he had painted a picture on a canvas, but he asks you to penetrate the surface, as it were, and to go with him inside the house. He gives you a perspective, and asks you to deceive yourself into the belief that you are looking through the wall into a room, a staircase, or a stable inside. He asks you to look at a flat wall with pointed arches and irregular windows, and to believe that it is a Renaissance front with all its appurtenances of column and architrave and cornice, and that the windows are, not really windows, but something else. And in order to persuade yourself of all this you must place yourself where he asks you, and get yourself into the frame of mind which he requires of you. Indeed, it is plain that on this occasion he gave full rein to his extraordinary power of rendering natural objects in paint to the very point of illusion, in order to produce a series of surprises and ocular deceptions, considering that the purpose and the occasion justified him. For it is to be observed that among his easel pictures, which contain many passages of the most dexterous and realistic painting of inanimate objects, he never allows this power of his to go beyond the limit which his true instinct as an artist laid down for him.¹ Here, how-

¹ The apparent exception to this statement in the skull which appears in the "Ambassadors" may be otherwise explained.



PORTION OF THE HOUSE OF THE DANCE AT BASEL

BERLIN PRINT ROOM



ever, in the House of the Dance, if we may trust traditional evidence, he went to the point of painting ocular illusions which should amuse the men of the street. We hear, too, of a paint-pot and brushes so painted that they should look when seen from below as if they had been accidentally left there when the scaffold was moved. We are told again, though this story appears to refer to some other house, of a dog so skilfully painted that other dogs barked at him as they passed. And although these stories may be classed with the fables of the grapes of Zeuxis which the birds tried to peck, and the curtain which Parrhasius tried to draw aside, yet the fact of their existence shows that Holbein had in certain parts at least of this work deliberately courted the admiration of the vulgar by providing them with entertainment best suited to their understanding.

It is possible, and even probable, that much of our criticism would be modified if we were able to see the work as it came finally from the hand of Holbein. It is probable that we should find that he had so handled the matter that the true and legitimate interests of his façade had taken the first place and become predominant, while these minor realisms and perspective tricks had fallen back into their proper place. And that this was really the case is suggested by the fact that the popular name of the house, the House of the Dance, was affixed to it on account of that same frieze of dancing peasants to which the objections raised in the previous paragraphs do not apply. The fact of that name having clung to the house implies that the interesting feature, that which attracted the spectator, was really this frieze. The house did not get its name from the paint-pot, nor the barking dog, nor the horse in the stable, nor the delusive staircase, nor from any of the optical illusions which the descriptions lay so much stress upon. These things are apt to occupy too large a space in such descriptions. In the actual work itself, as it appealed to the eye and the mind, it is, after all, probable that these illusive tricks of painting were made to fall into secondary importance, while the fullest force and emphasis was given to the leading decorative motive of the whole.

It was in the spring of 1521 that the council of Basel met for the first time in the great hall of the new Rathaus, under the presidency of the burgomaster, Jakob Meier, who was destined to be expelled from office before the year was out. Probably the bareness of the room with its huge empty wall spaces, and the fact that they seemed to have at hand the very man who should fill them to best advantage and at no exorbitant price, too—the sum ultimately offered to Holbein was 120 gulden—decided the council to give a commission for the adornment of their council chamber with pictures which should be symbolic of the majesty of justice and integrity which they desired to honour there in their practice. Holbein accepted the commission, and forthwith proceeded with his task. He com-

pleted three of the large subjects with five allegorical figures and many details before the close of the year 1522, and he then pleaded to the town council that he had already more than completed the amount of work paid for by the council at the price of 120 gulden. The plea was fully acknowledged, and the sum paid in full. But no more was immediately forthcoming for the continuance of the work, and it was not till 1530, after the painter's return from his first visit to England, that the remaining three wall paintings were added. All have alike perished; indeed, they began to suffer injury from damp a very few years after they were finished, and in 1579 they were so obliterated that Hans Bock was commissioned to paint copies on canvas which were placed over them. Faint traces are said to have been visible when the town hall was restored early in the last century.

It is to be supposed that in such a place and under such circumstances Holbein would have put out all his strength, and the loss of these works is even more to be lamented than the loss of the houses whose façades he had adorned.

Once more we find ourselves without adequate means of judging of these wall paintings, and of comparing them with similar undertakings by the great masters of Italian fresco. In two of the subjects, the "Rehoboam" and the "Meeting of Saul and Samuel," we have Holbein's small original sketches, and in the other cases small copies executed before the final disappearance of the paintings from the wall. But once more we can only confess that all endeavours to conjure up from such evidences the feeling and effect of works carried out on a large scale and depending on colour, light and shade, and general dignity of treatment, is vain and impossible. We must content ourselves with a mere statement of the subjects, which were as follows:

(1.) Charondas, the lawgiver of Thurii, who, having one day inadvertently broken his own law against the wearing of weapons in public by riding through the streets on his return from hunting with a weapon at his side, on being made aware of his oversight, put himself to death rather than violate the majesty of the law.

(2.) Zaleucus of Locris, who, having condemned his son to the loss of both eyes for adultery, gave one of his own eyes that his son might be spared the loss of both.

(3.) Curius Dentatus, who is sending back the ambassadors of the Samnites, when they bring their bribe of gold cups to tempt him to withdraw from the attack upon them.

(4.) Sapor, King of Persia, who used the Emperor Valerian as a mounting block whereby to mount his horse.

Between these four pictures came single figures of Christ and David, and three allegorical figures of Justice, Wisdom, and Temperance. The

three pictures which were painted in 1530-1, and which will be again referred to in a later chapter, were—

- (1.) "Rehoboam and the Elders of Israel."
- (2.) "Saul meeting Samuel."
- (3.) "Hezekiah destroying the Idols"—with, possibly, a fourth subject, unknown to us, from Hezekiah.

The allegorical purpose of these works is fairly easy of interpretation, the subjects all referring to the presence or absence of virtues which concern themselves with the government of men. The first two subjects clearly point to the virtues of justice and self-sacrifice for the sake of duty, as exemplified by the acts of Charondas and Zaleucus. The example of Curius Dentatus is one of integrity. At this stage commences the representation in three scenes of the ruin which is brought about by the absence of certain virtues necessary to those who govern. Thus Sapor represents insolence, Rehoboam represents despotism, and Saul, self-will. The last scene, the "Hezekiah destroying the Idols," formed in my opinion no part of the original scheme, but was an interpolation, probably by the wish of the council in the year 1530, to exemplify and also to justify their action during the recent iconoclastic struggle. For a different interpretation of the "Rehoboam" and the "Saul" I must refer the reader to the works of Woltmann.

In endeavouring to estimate the position of Holbein as a fresco painter when compared with the great Italians, we are, in the first place, as we have already seen, without any visible existing example from his hand whereby we might reconstruct, or, at any rate, imagine the effect of those which have passed away. Not only this, but in the case of Holbein we are practically without the evidence or opinion of contemporary judges of real weight. A good deal that is lost to us in Italian art is at least borne witness to by competent judges who beheld it. For a lost fresco of Michelangelo we may appeal to those which we can still see by him. But it is not possible to quote a judgement of accepted weight with reference to those lost wall paintings of the great German master. We are compelled to fall back upon the unsatisfactory generalization by which we convince ourselves that one who showed such mastery in other branches would not have fallen short in this. But we have to take it upon trust. We are able perhaps to satisfy ourselves, by means of our large faith in the man when we really know him, that he who could invest the little two-inch woodcuts of the "Dance of Death" with a largeness which makes them as great as if they had occupied half a wall in the town hall, would certainly have possessed all that breadth and simplicity and dignity of handling which may be set down as the very first qualities, in whose absence no others are of any avail for the painter who attempts a branch of art where there have been so many

failures in proportion to the successes. Holbein, we may safely assume, possessed these qualities in a measure which was hardly vouchsafed to more than a few even of that select band whom we know, by the evidence of our own eyes, to have succeeded. And, again, we may claim for Holbein that he possessed a second great requisite for success in the handling of historical incidents such as were demanded of him by those who employed him for these wall paintings, namely, that power of telling a story clearly and expressively without the overcrowding of incident, the multiplication of small detail, and the insertion of every fact necessary and unnecessary, ugly or beautiful, to the obscuring of his main purpose. Holbein had even at that early age, and soon after the outset of his career, shaken himself free of that which had been the besetting danger, not only of the German school to whose traditions he had been born, but even of his own father. There can be no stronger testimony to the natural genius of the man than his power to throw aside almost completely in his mere boyhood the defects which even Dürer had not been able to escape. The woodcuts to the Old Testament possess this power of simplification of the incident, the power of leaving out or of not seeing what is not wanted, in a very high degree. And one argues that this great quality would not have failed him—and here we may quite safely also appeal to such of the small preliminary sketches as survive—in a branch of his art where its use was even more required. As a colourist, indeed, we may not claim for him the rich and splendid harmonies of a Venetian, but we may claim for him that dignified and reserved use of colour which never offends, never obtrudes itself, always satisfies, even though it does not enthrall nor intoxicate the sense. Here again we may feel safe in trusting Holbein. But when we have said all this, after all what does it come to but this, that there is strong presumptive evidence for believing in the greatness of Holbein's power as a wall painter; that there is visible evidence that the design as we see it on a small scale and divested of its subsequent expression through colour, was simple, dignified and expressive? But the cruel destruction of all the finished works of this kind from the hand of the one great German master of his day and school, who perhaps stood as the equal of the great Italian fresco painters, has left us merely to lament the loss of what, in spite of the many laborious pages that have from time to time been written on them, we are wise to confess that we cannot profitably pass judgement on.

Years afterwards, when Holbein paid his last visit to Basel, he is said to have been dissatisfied with his wall paintings, and to have expressed his intention of repainting them at his own expense when he came back to live and work in the city. This has been taken to be an unfavourable criticism by Holbein, viewing with a maturer eye and with maturer judgement his own earlier work. And if this is so, it is of great value; although, one may

remark, the verdict of an artist upon his own early work, especially of one who, like Holbein, was always searching after perfection, and always, therefore, as such men are, possessed of that divine discontent which makes the truest artists dissatisfied with their own work, is not always that which other impartial judges endorse. But I am inclined to doubt whether we may really interpret that wish on Holbein's part as expressing dissatisfaction merely with the artistic shape or accomplishment of his work. For we know that destruction had set in very early on the ill-kept treasures of the Rathaus, and that through some structural flaw the wall paintings went to pieces after a very short life, probably through damp and defectively prepared walls, painted on too soon after their completion. And this fact somewhat discounts the dissatisfaction of Holbein with his own work, since it may have been directed to the dilapidation and decay to which they had already been doomed. It is on record, also, that with regard to the House of the Dance he expressed the opinion that it was "not so bad." Now the external wall paintings of that house survived, in some sort of shape, till the year 1779, and that fact shows that they were in 1538 free from some of the dangers of destruction which already threatened the internal wall paintings of the Rathaus. I hold, therefore, that it is quite conceivable that Holbein's dissatisfaction, as implied in his determination to repaint the Rathaus subjects, may have had little or no connection with his artistic judgement on his own early performances.

CHAPTER VII
PORTRAIT OF AMERBACH—THE DEAD CHRIST—
THE PASSION PICTURE, ETC.

WE are without precise information as to the length of Holbein's sojourn in Lucerne. The only entry which relates to him in any official document is a notice in the account book of the Guild of St. Luke, here as elsewhere the patron saint of painters, that Hans Holbein had paid one gulden. But no date is given, nor is it stated whether this payment implied full membership. It is probable that he returned to Basel somewhat early in 1519, since on July 3, 1520, he was granted full citizenship.¹ And it is not likely that he would have received that privilege if, after a short sojourn in Basel from 1515 to 1517, he had been an absentee for over two years in Lucerne. If, however, we suppose a much shorter absence from the city, which made no very serious break in the continuity of his residence—at any rate, not enough to disqualify him on residential grounds from receiving the full citizenship—then we not only seem to meet the time requirements of the case, but we also can account for why the work executed by him at Lucerne was practically confined to the Hertenstein house, most other works recorded by older writers having proved to be mythical. And if this suggestion be correct, namely, that he would not have been granted the full rights of citizenship in July, 1520, if he had been absent from the city, or a mere bird of passage for several years, that consideration further disposes of Woltmann's view that he was travelling hither and thither, perhaps to Italy, perhaps elsewhere at that period. The stay at Lucerne for the completion of the Hertenstein house consumes all the time which we can reasonably assume for this absence, and would leave no margin of time which we can fill up by any such imagined wanderings.

Holbein on his return to Basel continued his work for the wood-engravers, which indeed had probably been little, if at all, interrupted by his absence in Lucerne. There was constant, probably daily, communication between Lucerne and Basel, both lying in the main track between Italy and the North, and the transfer of wood-blocks, drawings, and the directions for them, must have been a very easy affair, involving no long delays. We find him, indeed, on his return to Basel in touch with the same circle into which his ability had gained him an entrance a few years before, on his

¹ He was admitted to full membership of the Guild Zum Himmel in September, 1520. Probably a residential qualification of some length was needed for this also.



Bonifacius Amerbach, 1519.
Basel Museum.

first arrival. For Froben, for Adam Petri, and for Johann Wolff, the chief printers of Basel, he continued to produce drawings on the wood, which were cut sometimes indifferently, sometimes well, and at times superbly by the wood-engravers settled in the city. But we find him also now in contact with another name which held a distinguished place in the literary annals of Basel. One of the earliest printers who had made the Basel presses known was Hans Amerbach. We have already seen that to be a printer in Basel meant something more than the mere craftsmanship of type-designing and of the handling of the printing ink, though that in itself, where the design of the type and the execution were both so excellent, assuredly gave the printers of the fifteenth century the title to rank as artists. But their position as publishers gave them a connection with letters in another sense, and it causes us no surprise to find that Bonifacius Amerbach, the friend of Holbein, of Froben, of Erasmus, of Jakob Meier, was a man of the highest education, and one who, in addition to his other attainments, was able in the year 1524 to accept the professorship of law at Basel. And it is to his appreciation of Holbein in the early years of his career that we owe the preservation of nearly all which is left to tell us of the successive steps of his progress at Basel. He gathered together many examples of Holbein's skill as a draughtsman, which else would doubtless have perished as so many others have perished. The Amerbach collection of Holbein's works was purchased by the city of Basel in 1661, and formed the nucleus of that gallery which makes Basel a place of necessary pilgrimage to those who would understand Holbein.

The portrait of Bonifacius Amerbach at the age of twenty-four, painted by Holbein in 1519, hangs now among the other oil paintings by him in that gallery. It is painted on a panel of no great size, but for largeness in the truest sense it could hardly be made bigger if it were painted on a six-foot canvas. Boniface Amerbach, whose name is spelt *Amorbacchium* in the inscription attached, probably because the writer of the lines, whom I suspect to have been Erasmus, thought it gave a more Latin turn to it, is shown to us as a brown-haired dark-eyed man of ruddy bronzed complexion, with clean-cut handsome features, and with a look of much thought upon the face. It answers, indeed, to one good, though not always infallible test of portraiture, since it not only convinces one as one looks at it, but remains with one when one is away from it. The face, indeed, seems to correspond well with what we know of Amerbach from other sources, a thoughtful, cultivated man of high character. It is, withal, of true German type. It would be difficult to mistake the nationality of the man if we were shown the portrait for the first time and knew nothing of his history. It would be equally difficult to escape the knowledge that we are looking at the portrait of a man of intellect and of refinement.

The colour of this portrait is wholly delightful, although it is not through its colour that it appeals in the first instance. Holbein throws the head against a sky of that transparent seagreen deepened into blue which so often appears in his early portraits. He does not, be it observed, attempt to fuse the head with the surrounding atmosphere; he uses his background rather to detach by strong but not inharmonious contrast the figure that is set against it. And this practice was but very slightly modified by him to the very last. Against this sky is seen a spray of brownish-green leaf, which leads the eye away a little from the rather large mass of black in the mantle, while it also serves to break the great space of bright colour behind. The highest colour note is, however, supplied by the vest which appears under the open mantle. It is of a rather pale turquoise colour, broken by the lights which fall upon the embroidered and quilted damask.

Holbein has handled his various textures with consummate skill, and yet with that due sense of proportion which belonged from the first to this completely self-possessed artist. No Dutchman of them all who paints a silk or satin dress for the sake of the portrait of the dress renders texture with more entire understanding and dexterity than Holbein when he wishes. But Holbein uses his skill with a reticence. He wishes to tell you, to be sure, what manner of clothes the man or the woman wore whom he was painting, and how he or she looked in them, for that is an important part of their personality as those about them knew them in life. Therefore the garments shall be real, as real as he can make them, but the personality, the face, the hands, all in fact that makes permanent humanity, shall be real with a reality that shall make it as impossible for you to look at the clothes first and the humanity second, as it is for us, when we look at a beautiful woman beautifully dressed, to think of the dress first, and of her beauty afterwards, or not at all.

It is three years since he painted Jakob Meier and his wife. Since then he has painted house-fronts, designed woodcuts, armour, plate, and here in this portrait of Amerbach he is with us again in precisely the same mood as when he came before us when he painted his first portrait, and as he will be when he paints for us his last. Indeed, it is very difficult to set down on paper any point of excellence in which this portrait is surpassed by any which he was afterwards to paint, unless it be that here we are made more conscious as we look at it of extreme care, while in such a portrait as the "Sieur de Morette" we are conscious of nothing, until we force ourselves to become so, except that we are looking at a living being, a portrait that seems as it were to have come of itself.

We may notice one technical point in this portrait of Amerbach which concerns itself with the mere quality of paint, but which is very characteristic of the artist in all his easel works, I mean the surface which he gives

to them. There is in all the genuine paintings of Holbein which have not been restored—the number is becoming annually smaller in an age when almost every great picture gallery keeps a salaried restorer—a certain transparent delicious quality of surface, something akin to the beautiful patina which one sometimes sees on an old Greek bronze, which Holbein evidently caressed and handled as tenderly and as lovingly as indeed, to go further with our comparison, any true collector would handle that same precious patina. Now this quality is as easily destroyed as the surface of a bronze, and it is equally impossible to give it back to either when it is once obscured or removed. A restored Holbein in which this wonderful surface has been turned to a slightly smoky texture is too often hardly a Holbein at all. Better by far the tokens of decay which still allow the superb qualities of the man's technique to shine through it all than the restoration which gives you in reality some other man's surface.

The Amerbach portrait bears date, as we have seen, 1519. No important easel painting can be traced to Holbein's hand till the year 1521, when we find a work of the most striking character in the "Christ in the Tomb" of the Basel Gallery. The painter was doubtless not without much employment meanwhile. We shall see presently that there is reason to suppose that numerous designs for glass paintings, of which a certain number survive, belong to the years between 1518 and 1521, and his work for the wood-engravers still continued. Probably, also, he was engaged in the decoration of houses in Basel. But the year 1520 is, so far as dated examples of his work are concerned, not a fruitful year. In 1521 came the commission for the painting of the town hall, which we have already dealt with in the preceding chapter. It was probably before that commission was given that Holbein painted the "Christ in the Tomb," which we are now to examine.

Upon a long narrow panel Holbein has painted the body of a dead man lying upon his back, the face slightly turned over towards the spectator. Above it is the inscription, *JESUS NAZARENUS REX JUDÆORUM*. The Basel Gallery catalogue suggests that it once was an altar-piece in a church. If this suggestion is correct, it would seem further probable that it was one of those pictures which a year or two later than the date of its painting were removed from the churches, a short time before that iconoclastic outbreak which destroyed nearly all the religious pictures remaining in Basel.

It is difficult to convey to a reader who has not seen it, the effect which is produced upon the spectator who looks for the first time upon this appalling presentment of death. Holbein has painted from the deadhouse or from the hospital a study, exact in every detail, of one whose death had been violent, or in whom death had brought with it those after-consequences which make it painful, even terrible to look upon. No attendant circum-

stance of pain, even of coming decay, is omitted—one shrinks from their exact enumeration. It is a convincing, accurate, relentless study of the truth as he saw it in the model from which he painted it. Here there is no trace of the dignity of death; none of that unearthly beauty which sometimes transforms the face of those who could not claim in life what men call beauty; no majesty; no mystery; not even the piteousness of death. All these feelings are obliterated—they become impossible—in the presence of the all-absorbing horror of this realization of mortality. It is a presentment such as those who had loved best could least bear to look upon. All the sensations, love, pity, reverence, which it should be the first purpose of the picture to produce, are put to flight. We cannot see the Christ for the corruption.

Now, if we assume that this was indeed Holbein's conception; that is to say, that having been asked to paint, or having determined to paint the dead Christ, he conceived the subject in this shape, and gave forth this as his imagined vision of the entombed Saviour, to be placed above an altar in a church, then we are driven to say that either his imagination, his power of conceiving a high ideal, was so tied down to mere naturalism that he could not rise above the most literal truths of poor mortality, and must realize his vision by a study from the charnel-house; or else we are driven to put into his mouth some such explanation for himself as this: Death, especially violent death, is often, or generally, an ugly, even a repulsive thing. A man who has died such a death is often terrible to behold. Christ died such a death. Therefore, since I know that a man who had died a violent death looked like this—for I saw such an one and painted such an one, and you take my word for it that it is like—I give this to you as my only realization of the dead Saviour.

To accept either of these views is to contradict entirely what we know of Holbein from his own work of about this period. It is but one year to the time when he shall paint the "Madonna of Solothurn," a work which is neither lacking in imagination of a high order, nor yet of that refined vision by virtue of which the really great artist—the true Seer—is able to avert his eyes from all which is not needed to be seen. It is, again, no long time before, in his "Dance of Death," the work in which, above all others that we owe to him, his gift of imagination is most conspicuous, he shows himself so little tied down by the chains of mere physical realism, and so completely indifferent to mere naturalism as compared with the expression of an idea, that I am unable to find one instance out of that whole series in which the skeleton is correctly given. And if we are tempted to take the view that Holbein was in the "Dead Christ" of Basel Gallery deliberately and of set purpose carrying out a preconceived principle by which physical facts should be facts even to the exclusion of higher facts, we have only to

look at the series of ten drawings from the "Passion of Christ," destined for stained glass, which hang in the same gallery, and which were designed probably a little earlier, to see that in these Holbein has fully realized that the dignity and pathos of suffering are more potent elements of dramatic force than the mere physical symptoms of it.

In short, I think that an explanation must be sought in a different direction. Holbein painted or began to paint this study without any conception in his mind at all. He had merely been painting a study from death which some chance had thrown in his way. He paints it as any artist should, as an exercise of his technical power, with all the fidelity of which he is capable, departing in no respect from the truth, however terrible, which he saw before him, improving nothing, omitting nothing, refining nothing. You have here, indeed, a glimpse of the means by which the artist reached his technical certainty of eye and hand. When it is finished, or possibly before it is finished, he allows himself to give it a title as a "Dead Christ," and in so doing he did an injustice to his own instinct and to his own power as a great imaginative master. If it is asked how this could have come about, it must be remembered that in that day and in that country, in spite of its tendency to realism, there was no place for a mere rendering of physical fact as such, no toleration of a piece of painting for painting's sake. Holbein could not hang his study of a dead man in some exhibition, as men have done often enough with studio models in modern salons and shows, with some such pseudo-title as "*Après la Supplice*" attached. The point of view of art in that day demanded a purpose, religious or classical, from every work of art. And Holbein allowed himself to supply, if one may use the expression, a posthumous religious title to what had been begun as an interesting artist's exercise.

I do not therefore think that we may call this work in evidence that Holbein was really carrying forward to its logical conclusion the principle which seems to have animated him in that early picture of "The Scourging," of which we have spoken at length in an earlier chapter. Its value and its interest lie rather in the light which it throws on the thoroughness of Holbein's practice, on the assured progress of his technique, and on the uncompromising manner in which he faced and overcame all difficulties connected with the rendering of natural fact according to its natural appearance. As a religious conception I do not believe that Holbein himself in his later years would have consented to be judged by this work.

It may be convenient at this point to allude to a picture in the Basel Gallery, the "Passion of Christ" in eight subjects painted in oil upon four long narrow upright panels united in one frame.¹ The Basel Gallery Cata-

¹ This picture must on no account be confused with the "Passion" of Christ on ten separate

logue attributes them to the year 1521, first half. Their authenticity has long been a battle-ground for critics, and it is long likely to remain so. The picture was originally in possession of the Rathaus, and in the year 1771 the council of Basel decreed its presentation to the public library of the town, causing it, however, to be restored before its transfer by the artist Grooth. The amount of cleaning and "retouching"—ominous word—which that artist employed is a very important factor in the decision of whether these eight subjects are the work of Holbein or not. It is evident that up to the period of their "retouching" and transfer no doubt had been entertained as to their authenticity, and it is further clear that they then enjoyed a reputation which has been somewhat undermined since that date. The first who challenged their attribution was Rumohr, and he has been followed by Wornum and Mantz, and lastly by Mr. F. G. Stephens, who, in a valuable trio of articles on Holbein in the "Portfolio" volume of 1883, declares himself unable to accept them as the work of Holbein, but prefers to consider them the work of an unknown artist of Basel, though of no less power than Holbein himself. On the other side, that is to say in favour of the old attribution, we find amongst others Woltmann, who goes so far as to pronounce the somewhat sweeping verdict that whosoever does not see in them the work of Holbein had better declare that Holbein never existed. I must confess myself unable to see the logical necessity of this. But I do recognize the value of a remark which Woltmann makes, that it is easier to recognize them as the work of Holbein if they are viewed through photographs than when one stands in front of the picture itself. I had myself experienced this same result, and I am inclined to think that that fact presents us with the key to the situation. I believe that we are looking at a design by Holbein, once a very great one, which has been so entirely repainted, "retouched," by a painter of the eighteenth century that Holbein's design lies buried beneath a changed colouring and a different technique. And the view, therefore, that we are not looking at Holbein's technique is probably quite correct. But I find it very difficult to think of another painter to whom we could owe these designs. The restorer has indeed been so far faithful to the drawing that he has kept his colour within the old boundaries, though he has given false emphasis by means of it to portions of the work which in all probability the original designer did not emphasize. But through it all there comes to us, as we look at this picture and try to disengage our vision from the distracting and painful discordances of shot yellows and pinks—of the types beloved by the late Roman school—crude blues and greens and harsh reds, a sense of dignity in the composition of many of these subjects which makes us ask whom can we think of beyond

sheets of paper in the same gallery, forming designs for stained glass, to which reference has already been made, and with which a later chapter will have to deal more fully.

Holbein himself who would have done these things quite in this manner, with this largeness of expression on a very small scale, and with this dramatic unity. The scene of the Mocking of Christ, in the lower left-hand corner, is as a piece of evidence of its authorship that which carries with it the most weight. Conviction is hardly possible where the evidence has been so obscured, but while I wholly agree with Wornum and Mr. Stephens that on the grounds of technique we could not, as we see the picture, assign it to Holbein, I find it equally difficult to reject it as a design originally by Holbein and painted over by a later artist.

CHAPTER VIII

DESIGNS FOR GLASS

IN the chapter of this book which dealt with Holbein's youth at Augsburg I pointed out what opportunities that city offered to one of his tastes for becoming acquainted with the practical needs of many kinds of handicrafts. The training which he had received there by constant and unavoidable association with the craftsmen who were his fellows bore immediate fruit when his independent life as an artist opened out for him at Basel. The title of craftsman we are not able to claim for him, for though he designed freely for many crafts, we are not able to prove in any instance that he practised the craft himself. He drew numerous designs on wood for the engravers, but we cannot absolutely prove, however probable we may think it, that he ever cut a block, though to a man of his trained capacities, who thoroughly understood the requirements and the limitations of the art, it would be no great task to achieve the simpler technics of that craft: he drew many designs for painted windows, but we have no means of knowing whether he ever actually executed a painting on glass,¹ though it is likely enough that he did so: he designed cups for goldsmiths, which John of Antwerp and other craftsmen should carry out: jewellery for other hands to fashion: swords and daggers for the armourer to forge and chisel: and covers for the bookbinder. A designer for the crafts, therefore, rather than himself a craftsman, so far as we are able to speak from the evidence which we possess.

The artist who designs for any handicraft compels us to examine his designs not merely from the point of view of their intrinsic beauty, dignity, worthiness, when we look at them as expressions of an idea, but also from the point of view of their application to the needs and limitations of the particular handicraft to which they will be intrusted, and through which they will be translated into that final language in which they will have to speak to men. No dignity of design is of any avail if it is to be lost eventually through the incapacity of the particular craft to express it fully.

¹ I believe that I am right in saying that no piece of painted glass which can be assigned with certainty to Holbein is known to exist. But his manner may be found very frequently in subsequent examples of German painted glass of the sixteenth century, and exercised no small influence in Southern Germany.



CHRIST FIXED TO THE CROSS. DESIGN FOR GLASS

BASEL.



The suitability of the design to the exact needs of the material, to the exact possibilities of the craft, is of primary importance.

There are at Basel some twenty-five designs, which are recognized in the catalogue as designs for painted glass. To these I should myself feel somewhat inclined to add the six costume sketches, although the absence of an architectural framework around them may argue against that view. The designs include the figures of saints, religious scenes, coats of arms, and the insignia of towns, such as Basel itself. In all cases where the purpose is undeniable they are treated as opaque pictures to be painted on glass, and they are placed in architectural settings which act as a framework to separate them from the colourless glass in which, according to the German fashion of the day, they were to be set as panels.

These designs were, it must be carefully observed, to be carried out as painted glass. And here it becomes necessary to emphasize the distinction between painted glass and stained glass. In stained glass, such as we see for instance in the splendid thirteenth-century examples of Chartres, Le Mans, and other French cathedrals, where the windows are in such perfect harmony with the architecture as to seem to form a part of it, the design is a mosaic of pieces of translucent glass previously coloured by the fusion of metallic oxides under great heat, so that the colour is actually incorporated in the substance of the glass. Though figures are used and subjects represented there is no attempt at the making of a picture, but on the contrary a perfectly frank acceptance of the limitations which the use of patches of stained glass obviously imposes. There can be no question of making a picture out of a material whose first and finest quality is that it lets the light shine through it from outside, the full beauty of the material depending entirely upon its translucency. For it is a fact which hardly needs stating that a solid body, as, for instance, a human figure or a stone building, does not allow light to shine through it, but on the contrary blocks the passage of light, and the endeavour to represent such a body in a natural manner and with full pictorial reality, with all the modelling through light and shade proper only to an opaque object, is evidently to try and reconcile two wholly contradictory conventions. The earlier stained-glass workers, unconsciously perhaps, but completely, recognized the limitations which the use of translucent material imposed, while they also recognized the splendid decorative effects which it offered to them so long as they consented to these limitations. They employ therefore the human figure, and natural objects, rather as splendid symbols, sometimes merely as splendid patterns within whose lines they may confine the translucent patches of their stained glass without any pretence of offering the eye and the mind a real presentment of a natural object. There is neither modelling nor pictorial method. A patch of uniform crimson glass shaped within the

leads shall stand for a mantle; a similar patch of purple for a robe; and the light which shall give the highest glory to both colours shall be allowed to pass freely through. This is stained glass, as the early craftsmen of France and of Germany employed it, and not painted glass.

Painted glass, on the other hand, consists of painting the design, pattern, or picture, with vitrifiable or enamel colours on to glass, either plain or previously stained, which being once more fused under heat so locks up the vitrified colours with the substance of the glass that they become one with it, and the pattern or picture is permanently fixed in more or less opaque colours on a previously translucent ground. This fashion, commencing with the mere indication of lines for the divisions of the features or the folds of a robe, had gradually developed into the system by which the painting had become a pictorial representation. The glass, in fact, whether stained or unstained, became as it were the canvas on which an opaque or semi-opaque figure should be painted. And in Germany, in the sixteenth century, this method of dealing with glass had gone so far that the earlier tradition had almost died out, and a complete pictorial representation had begun to be the aim of the glass-painter—an aim which, however, it was left to the nineteenth century to carry to its extreme point in that type of painted glass which is often known as Munich glass. It is obvious that in thus trying to make a transparent substance yield a result which an opaque or solid substance is alone fitted to yield, the pictorial glass-painters of the sixteenth century and their successors were employing a compromise between two conflicting aims in art, and with the result that invariably follows such compromises. They lost the translucent splendour of the material as it appears in the handicraft of the older workers, and they did not obtain a truly pictorial result in exchange. They sinned against their material, and one may be sure that in art as in other things the sin will find us out.

It has been necessary to say thus much, lest in presently praising the designs of Holbein for painted glass, I should seem to be acquiescing in the false principle which had been adopted by the German glass-painters of the sixteenth century, and which was destined with later developments to lead to the degradation and extinction of the art. But the guilt of this misuse of the material must not be laid at Holbein's door. He had not suddenly broken with the sound traditions which had kept a noble but narrowly conventional art within its true lines. He found those conventions already broken, and the art far gone on the wrong road. He had to take the art as he found it. Even an artist of the truest instincts cannot live back into a previous age, he can only make great the art of his age as he finds it. And it is no reproach to Holbein that in preparing his designs for painted glass he took up the art in the exact stage in which he found



THE CRUCIFIXION. DESIGN FOR GLASS

BASEL



it, and treated his material as it was being universally treated in Germany at that time. He did, we need not waste time in either questioning the point or defending the position, regard painted glass as a means of expressing incident in much the same way as he would have expressed it on a painted panel or in a woodcut, merely keeping his designs simple enough and broad enough between the lines to prevent his window, or his glass panel, from darkening instead of lightening the chamber. He makes the design tell a story, express the most intense pathos, emphasize dramatic action, and in fact do all that a cartoon or a picture may be asked to do. The decorative use of the material is made secondary to this, it has to grow out of it or accompany it if it can. If it does not or cannot, at any rate the design, the expression through the drawing and the treatment, shall be there. That is what Holbein aimed at, and disapprove as we may we have to accept it from him, and see whether, with that as his aim, he can be seen, by the aid of his surviving designs, to have failed or to have succeeded.¹

And, keeping in mind that this was his primary object, we shall be able to form a judgement as to how far he accomplished it by an examination of the designs on paper which he left behind him. There are some twenty-seven drawings in the Basel Museum, carried out very broadly and simply in Indian ink, reinforced with a reed pen, seven in the British Museum,² and others in smaller numbers in the cabinets of European galleries.

It can hardly be profitable to enumerate the various subjects of these designs. I have already said that they include designs for armorial bearings, separate or combined figures—one fine set consists of a Virgin and Child and seven saints, eight subjects in all; but by far the finest set, and that which it will best repay us to examine, as typical of the artist's work for the glass-painter, is the series of ten separate subjects from the "Passion of Christ" in the Basel Museum. It will be convenient to enumerate them.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | (Catalogue number 31). | Christ before Caiaphas. |
| 2. | " " | (32). The Scourging. |
| 3. | " " | (33). The Mocking. |
| 4. | " " | (34). The Crown of Thorns. |
| 5. | " " | (35). Ecce Homo. |
| 6. | " " | (36). The Handwashing of Pilate. |

¹ In the church of St. Theodor at Basel is a window which was executed after one of Holbein's designs in this series.

² The reader is recommended to study the Passion series in the British Museum Print Room. They are, however, less fine than the designs for the same subjects in the Basel Museum, being weaker in outline and woollier in texture. And this, coupled with the fact that they are reversed from the Basel Passion series, gives the impression that they were in the first place "off-tracks" obtained by pressure from the Basel series and strengthened with pen and with washes.

7. (Catalogue number 37). The Bearing of the Cross.
8. " " (38). The Stripping off of the Robe.
9. " " (39). The Fixing to the Cross.
10. " " (40). The Crucifixion.

It has been suggested that these designs were intended to be executed on a very large scale in painted glass. Several considerations seem to me to negative this idea. The ten designs are rectangular and upright, the proportion of height to breadth being as five to three and a half. And if we imagine the design enlarged to, perhaps, ten feet by seven, we have to imagine a large rectangular window space to take it in. And it is difficult to believe in the possibility of supporting such an area of glass without bars of a very substantial description. But a careful examination of the designs will show that they are quite unfit for being divided vertically by mullions. Such a division would cut the design to pieces in such a manner as entirely to destroy the breadth and unity which is one of their finest characteristics. It is indeed true that frequently painted glass windows, as, for example, the great series of King's College Chapel at Cambridge, which are treated in the pictorial style of the sixteenth century, are divided by the vertical mullions, but if an experiment be made with these designs of Holbein by cutting a very narrow bar of paper, and passing it vertically upon them, the reader will find that there is hardly one of them in which such a division becomes possible without destruction to the design. Again, if the reader will hold a reproduction before him, and mentally enlarge it to ten feet by seven, he will find that such an enlargement would at once produce great emptiness in the upper portions, the spaces thus produced becoming very large. The general style of the designs seems to me rather to point to their having been intended for glass panels of no great size, made to be inserted into larger windows of plain glass, to be seen at no great height above the eye. This method was at the time much favoured in Germany, and examples of it will occur to every reader who is familiar with the public buildings of that date or with the national museums of the country. The fact that in each case the design is inclosed in an architectural framework favours the idea that they were intended as panels, the framework serving to separate the glass picture from the adjoining colourless glass.

Viewed merely as drawings, and omitting any further reference to their destination as applied art, they are perhaps more impressive than anything which Holbein has left us until we come presently to the "Dance of Death." They do not yield their full impression, indeed, to the casual glance nor to a full-speed inspection. They do not captivate the eye in the same way that the drawings of many another master hung upon a wall will do. On the contrary, they have in them that which rather impels the visitor to galleries who asks to be enticed to look at a picture by beauty of line



THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST. DESIGN FOR GLASS

PASEI.



or conspicuous grace in the figures to pass on to more attractive work. They have in them certain qualities which impress and continue to impress the mind after the eye has ceased to retain the exact record of their lines. In this series of Passion pictures Holbein has never forgotten the gravity, the dignity, the pathos of the theme of the Divine sorrow. He never allows the force of his conception to be weakened by the introduction of any motive which is merely graceful or pleasing. You are not asked to pause in the unfolding of the Great Drama as it comes before you incident by incident in order that you may admire the pose of some figure, the graceful line of some drapery, the consciously fine anatomy of some of the actors. Mere beauty for its own sake must not be there: it may be there if it grows out of the true telling of the tale according to his vision of it. And equally he will not now, whatever he did a few years ago, allow his mind to be checked in the contemplation of this stately sorrow that it may dwell upon some minor detail of truth, or even upon some major detail of truth if that detail asserts itself to the injury of the leading theme. The more one examines this series of designs the more does their impression grow and deepen.

In an earlier chapter we were led to consider the attitude of the young painter's mind when he painted that earliest rendering of the "Scourging of Christ" at Basel (1516). A comparison of that work with his rendering of the same subject in this smaller series of drawings will show that in the course of these few years Holbein's instinct had matured and developed in a very notable degree. The sense of proportion in the values of the various facts which a man's art has to deal with, the sense of relationship between the various truths which it has to present—facts and truths some of them subjective and some of them objective—is rarely the first sense which is fully developed in a young artist, even in one who is destined to become great. Insistence on some special set of facts seen from some individual standpoint, the aiming at some special phase of truth, either in technique, or in manner of seeing, or of imagining, is nearly always the first manifestation of individuality even in the greatest of men. And in Holbein's earliest rendering of the Passion of Christ we saw the tendency to insist on truths, physical truths, which carried out to their utmost literalness do in effect drive back the mind, not only from the attitude in which it can look upon those facts with calmness, but also from the attitude from which it can contemplate the more important facts. In the first picture of the "Scourging" it is the brutality, the ferocity of the deed on the part of the doers which forces itself upon us. Turn to the rendering of the same scene in this later, though not much later series, and we shall find that, though we are still conscious of the cruelty of the deed, the feeling which has now come uppermost, that is to say, if we are reading the series as a series, for one must make that a condition of its true interpretation, is that of the pathos and the dignity of the

suffering. There is in this true realism, as there always is in everything which Holbein does, but it is kept in due subordination to the great story which he has to tell. Still, we shall observe, therefore, the telling of the story is his aim as it was before, but he sees that his story must be told differently now lest those who hear it should carry away, as they are apt to do when a story is told with wrong emphasis, the memory of some sensational detail rather than the main purport of its telling. We are able to see, because the mind is no longer agitated by the obtrusion of ghastly incident, what it was and what it meant.

And while he thus preserves the unity of the great thought which animates the whole series of designs Holbein does not throw away any minor truth which is needed for the complete telling of history. For example, in the "Affixing to the Cross," he has drawn in the foreground a blacksmith's box with all the tools distinctly stated, and yet not so forcing themselves upon the eye as to draw away our attention from the great central action of the scene. One man is engaged in boring a hole in the wood. He does it with the simple movement which is natural to the action. He is no longer the violent, angular, obtrusive being whom the earlier Germans would have given us. His businesslike indifference, the indifference of one who has had the same thing to do in many similar scenes and to whom Christ was no more than any other, is infinitely more telling, even as a piece of callous brutality, and interferes less with what we want to think about than the older presentment, such even as Holbein himself might have given us but a few years earlier.

And it is this union of true German motives, sincerity, thoroughness, plainness of speech, with the genius of the man himself that makes these designs typical of the Holbein whom we know. In our first chapter we saw how the very palpable defects of the German school had grown out of their virtues, and how the lack of a due sense of proportion, the absence of the refining and controlling spirit of the really inspired artist, had hitherto produced results which were so often nearly great and yet fell short of absolute greatness. The key to the understanding of Holbein lies in the fact that, while he retained the virtues of the school and was never other than German even to the end of his English days, yet he outlived, and that at a very early period of his career, all the defects and the exaggerations which had clung to that school and limited its achievements, adding to those same virtues just that touch of genius which, Midas-like, turns everything which it handles to gold. He seemed to have been sent amongst his own people, like Saul, to be a head and shoulders taller than any one of them, and yet to be still one of them. No one who possesses a good knowledge of the characteristics which mark the art of nations could fail, if he saw these drawings for the first time, at once to

DESIGN FOR THE ORGAN WINGS OF THE MINSTER

BASEL



assign them to the German school, nor could he hesitate long before he added to them the right name, so entirely do they carry the impress both of the nation and of the man.

We have already said that the same gallery contains some seventeen more designs for glass. A Virgin and Child, with a kneeling figure at the foot, is one of the finest of these. Amongst the armorial bearings and purely decorative pieces none is more elaborate and more fully made out than the well-known and frequently reproduced drawing in the print room at Berlin, in which a pair of Landsknechte act as the supporters to a shield, on which no bearings have, however, been added by Holbein. There are slight indications of colour on this drawing. It is probable that the greater number of these designs for glass were made to be carried out in that mixture of pale yellow and grisaille which is so often found on German glass of the period, the more brilliant hues being used sparingly for dresses and for the salient points of the costumes or the shields. The architectural details were probably carried out in pale yellow for the clear portions and grisaille for the shadows.

These drawings appear to belong for the most part to the first six years of Holbein's sojourn at Basel. One bears the date 1518, and was therefore probably drawn at Lucerne; another has the date 1520, and must therefore have been done after his return to Basel. It is important to draw attention to a peculiarity which makes itself felt in these drawings, and which is also to be observed in other early work by Holbein, namely, the shortness of the figures. This is especially noticeable in the design of St. Barbara, in which the lower portion of the dress seems to be cut off by the straight line of the steps on which she stands. But in this case at least the appearance of shortness is not entirely due to mere preference, conscious or unconscious, for a type. The figure is drawn to be seen from below—as in the case of the organ wings for Basel Minster, presently to be described—and Holbein deliberately employs one of his favourite perspective effects. He represents the figure as if standing on a flat ledge or step. And a living figure or a sculptured figure so seen from below would be practically hidden in the lower part by the projection of the step acting as a line in front of it. I am not concerned at this moment to discuss the question of whether Holbein did rightly in thus introducing into what should be a transparent piece of conventional decoration an appearance which could only be observed in figures modelled in relief. But that he did so will be realized by the spectator if he will place himself directly under the figure and look up.

The same intention is found in the very fine sketch which he made for the organ wings of Basel Minster. The finished works, painted in monochrome and of great size, were amongst the few pictures which escaped the fury of the iconoclastic outbreak in 1527, and they are now to be seen in

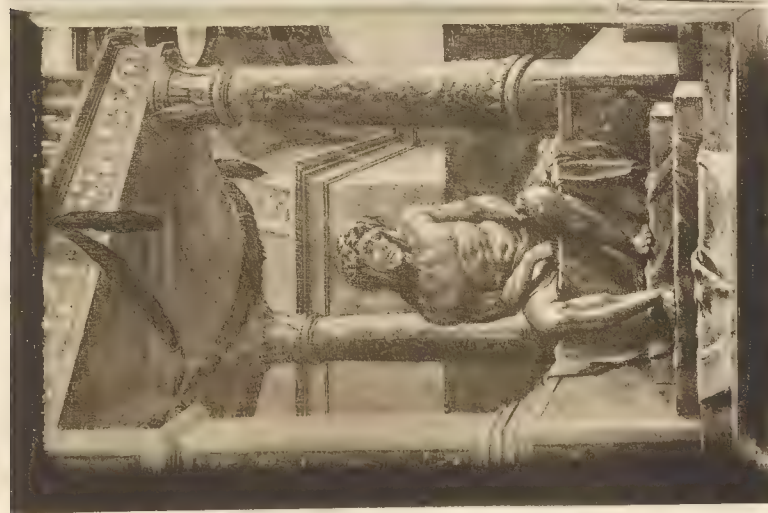
an adjoining room of Basel Museum. The sketch, at any rate as we view the two works in their present position, is preferable to the large finished wings. The figures are so represented that when they were looked at from down below they should suggest that part of the robe and of the feet were invisible through the projection of the ledge on which they stand. It is impossible to acquit Holbein here of an error in artistic judgement when he allows himself thus to introduce into the decoration of a flat surface the mere imitation of an effect which might be produced if the figures had been modelled in the solid, but which even in that case would have been avoided if possible by a sculptor. But if we set that consideration aside we must acknowledge that few finer or more dignified figures came from Holbein's hand.

To about the year 1521 I should be inclined to attribute a very important work in monochrome which is to be found in Basel Gallery—the store house from which we have to draw nearly all the examples which illustrate the early work of our painter. It represents in two panels of no great size the Man of Sorrows and the Mater Dolorosa. It is not possible to decide the exact purpose for which these two panels were painted, but they give the impression of having been preliminary designs for larger works, possibly for the wings of an altar-piece, to which Holbein from pure love of the work gave an unusual degree of finish. There is one indication only of colour, namely, the blue sky seen through the arches. There is nothing else in the picture which suggests that Holbein had intended to complete them in colour.¹ The Renaissance architecture is treated with the most loving care and the most masterly understanding, and the pictures in this respect remain to us one of the highest examples of Holbein's craftsmanship. The setting of the piece is indeed of faultless technique, the work of one to whom the planning of such ornament is not only not laborious, but an expression of spontaneous exuberant delight, in which the spectator is compelled to share, and from which he cannot withhold his sympathy even if his face be set as firmly against the style as that of Ruskin himself. But it is to none of these things that the pictures owe their place among the great designs of Holbein. The figure of Christ in the Man of Sorrows has for its expressiveness of its great theme few equals in Art. Once more the point of view is essentially Holbein's. He gives us the figure of one whose visage was marred more than any man's, who when we shall see Him has no beauty that we shall desire Him, the old Byzantine conception translated into the more intensely human sympathies of the German Renaissance. The moment chosen is that which immediately succeeds the crowning with thorns. The crown of thorns is still upon His brow, the

¹ See an important observation, however, on this point on page 124, on Holbein's technical methods.

ECCE HOMO AND MATER DOLOROSA

BASEL



royal robe stripped from the body and lying partly beneath the feet. The utter loneliness of the grief-stricken figure is enhanced by the gorgeous architecture amidst which the King of the Jews sits enthroned. It was not for mere technical display, not from mere delight in the designing of adornment that Holbein set that pathetic figure deserted of all men in the surroundings of a palace.

In the other panel, the Virgin as the Mater Dolorosa is set in the midst of similar surroundings. She kneels, her head turned towards the right, her hands raised as if by the involuntary action of the old motherly instinct. The motive, indeed, of the figure hardly appeals to us at first till Holbein's intention has come home to us. It is as if she had seen in a vision the figure of her son in his stricken solitude, she too in her solitude. And she turns her face sorrowfully towards him, her arms of their own accord shaping themselves to the instinctive mother's action as if she would take him in them once more as she used once to do. It is a very quiet sorrow this—Northern sorrow expressed with none of the external signs of emotion—not of that effusive gesture which belong as properly and as sincerely to the sorrow of the south. Contrast it, for example, with the Virgin in that "Entombment" by Gian Bellini in his earlier days which hangs in the Brera. If such a picture had been painted in the north we should accuse the sorrow of being theatrical, exaggerated, whereas it is quite a sincere picture of the signs by which sorrow displays itself in the south. With equal truth to nature Holbein draws the restrained, intensely felt, but little expressed grief of the impassive north. The face is a homely face, on which weeping and watching have left their trace. It is not beautiful, but just the face which might belong to any German mother, and so painted by Holbein with a full purpose. I have even thought that I could trace in the face, through the portrait which his father left at Augsburg, some likeness to his own mother as he remembered her, perhaps, in the later days of her adversity.

Of two panels which are preserved, after many wanderings, in the Cathedral of Freiburg im Bresgau, and which represent the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, it is only necessary to say that they seem to belong to the earliest years at Basel, and that the Nativity contains the same motive, namely, the light proceeding from the cradle of the infant and irradiating the scene around, which other artists used, and most notably of course Correggio in his picture known as "La Notte" at Dresden. It may be doubted, however, whether the motive originated with Holbein.

CHAPTER IX
THE SOLOTHURN MADONNA—THE DARMSTADT
MADONNA

THE moment when Hans Holbein and his brother Ambros had entered Basel was not the most favourable for one at least of the pair, whom destiny seemed to have marked by peculiar gifts to become one of the greatest as well as one of the most original and independent of religious painters. In 1515, indeed, men were still musing, and the fire had not yet burned. Religious feeling was strong, but not as yet fierce enough or bitter enough in Basel to create that division into two camps which was to follow at a surprisingly short interval. Before the year 1520 had ended the two parties had so far formulated their views, and so far chosen their watchwords, that, as we have seen, local politics were strongly tinged with religious animosities. It was just after that date that Jakob Meier, who had served as burgomaster for several years, and was the recognized leader of the old Catholic party in the council, was expelled from office. The charge on which he suffered expulsion had no directly apparent connection with religion. It referred to the question of his having accepted illegal rewards for services rendered to the King of France, but his disgrace appears to have been regarded as a triumph to the Protestant party in the council, and that fact is significant of the growth of that bitterness which was to end not many years later in the shedding of blood in the streets. The question concerns us here only as it affected the art of Hans Holbein. The growth of the reformed views had in the first instance brought reproach upon pictures in churches and elsewhere which had been used for superstitious purposes. Thence the feeling spread to those which, if they could not be so far accused, yet by nature of their subject linked themselves closely to those which had so been used. And in this list were included all pictures which represented the Madonna and the saints. Before long the feeling extended itself in the form of a general suspicion to all religious pictures. And because art at that period claimed for itself practically but three fields of action, religious subjects and classical subjects and portraiture—since landscape painting and genre painting were scarcely yet existent, even in embryo—it followed that the check to religious painting which resulted from the condition of religious feeling during those few years was for the time being a paralysis of art. For the discouragement which fell upon religious art spread itself by some connection of ideas, which it is more easy to under-

stand than to define, to all art whatever. Nor was the injury to art due alone to the direct action of this religious suspicion which had fallen upon its chief development. Indirectly also the result of the impending religious struggle made itself felt. Men do not stop to admire the beauties of nature as they are going into battle, neither do men's minds pause to take in pictures when they are on the eve of some great religious and social upheaval. The greatness of the stake which was evidently at issue, nothing less indeed than the religion of all Europe, absorbed all other interests. To enjoy art, as to enjoy poetry or music, needs a free and a happy mind. And there is direct evidence that in Basel at least the lesser artists were beginning to feel great distress. Holbein indeed survived, but, as Iselin put it, he had "to drink his wine from the tap." That is to say, that although his superiority to all the other artists of the place, coupled with his well-established position as a book illustrator, kept his head above water, he did not reach any condition of affluence. Commissions of all kinds were now scarce, and becoming every day scarcer as the great moment of religious conflict drew nearer. Commissions for religious pictures had for the reasons already given almost ceased to be known. When, in the year 1526, Holbein left Basel for England—"to try to scrape together a few angels," says Erasmus—he had practically bidden farewell to great religious art. Fate had decreed that by that new departure of his he was to display himself in a series of portraits which for many of their qualities have no rivals in the whole realm of art as it is known to us, yet he had, by no choice of his own, but through the ruling of necessity, closed the door behind him upon one branch of his art in which, if he had found opportunity to have followed it further, he might have stood almost alone amongst men who have ever painted. The two great Madonnas of Holbein, known to us as the Madonnas of Solothurn and of Darmstadt, from their present resting-places, stand by themselves as the evidences of Holbein's power to touch that one subject which can never grow old, but which can never be new, with an individuality and impressiveness which does somehow make those two pictures as we look at them a new treatment and a new revelation of a theme which had seemed by Holbein's day almost to have exhausted as surely as it had revealed the resources of all the schools and of all the painters. It is the theme in which the highest triumphs had been achieved by the greatest men, and the theme in which the lesser men had most revealed themselves. A theme, moreover, in which the test of success is most readily applied, since so long as the world lasts and motherhood is motherhood, every wholesome human being has in himself the power, not indeed to judge of a picture as a work of art, nor to gauge its success by any of those rules of art of which he may be wholly ignorant, but of estimating whether the vision of true and pure womanhood which the painter has sought to present awakes in him who sees it a corre-

sponding ideal. On that point the appeal is to the crowd at large, and there is no carrying the case further to any court of artists or of critics. The painter who essays this subject cannot bid any man, as Apelles bade the cobbler, to stick to his last. The circle of criticism here—in all save that which is purely technical or artistic—embraces no less than the entire census of our common humanity.

The "Madonna of Solothurn" owes its title to the fact that in the middle of the last century it came to light in the church of the village of Renchen near that town. Since that time it remained in private hands till the day of its transfer to the town gallery of Solothurn. Its condition at the time of its discovery seems to have been very bad. The panel on which it was painted was wormeaten and decayed, and the painting had to be transferred to a fresh panel, always a more risky task than the transfer of a picture painted upon canvas. Then followed the terrible necessity of a "complete restoration." Dr. Woltmann tells us that he saw the picture after its transfer to its new panel, but unhappily he gives no details of the exact damage which it had suffered, nor does he give us just the very facts which he might at that time have been able to preserve, of the exact changes which it underwent through its complete restoration. He merely tells us that he judges from photographs that the restoration was quite satisfactory. But unhappily the term "quite satisfactory" as applied to the restorations of pictures does not carry conviction. Dr. Woltmann mentions the fact that one authority stated that the face had undergone "restoration," but no one who knows the ordinary process of decay in neglected panel pictures will for a moment suppose that the wreckage had confined itself to the face of the Madonna. There can be no doubt that the picture had suffered heavily from the ravages of time, whatever it may or may not have suffered at the hands of the restorer. But our gratitude for the recovery of such a masterpiece, even if something has gone from us which we would willingly have kept, may well make us forget all sense of loss in the joy of possession. Whatever has been lost to us of the original surface, whatever has been obscured from us in the inevitable injuries of restoration, we have at least preserved to us the design of Holbein, and that a most noble one.

The "Solothurn Madonna" bears the date of 1522. We have absolutely no record, great or small, documentary or accidental, of its existence up to the very hour of its discovery in the last century. It has been suggested that it must have been originally painted for the chapel in the Minster of Solothurn. If that conjecture be right, then one would follow it up by the further suggestion that it may have been one of those paintings which was removed from its position in the minster just before the ruin fell upon so many pictures in the great outbreak. One may suppose that it may have been set aside in some lumber room, and at a later period passed on by sale



The Virgin with St. Martin & St. Ursus, 1329
oil on wood

of Italian origin

or gift to the obscurity of the village church. But another history suggests itself to me as probable, though hardly so probable as the older view. It may, like the "Meier Madonna," have been the commission of a Catholic devotee, and as such may have remained, like that masterpiece, in private possession, and so escaped the storm. Whatever be the true account, it is certain that it wholly escaped knowledge or recognition for over three hundred years.

The reader will, if he has read the preface of this book and followed its plan, have already understood that it is no part of its scheme to take picture by picture, and exhaust the patience of the reader and the type of the compositor in the description of minutiae, except where it is necessary to the understanding of motive or of technique to emphasize such points. Where a reproduction is given, the reader can inform himself as to the pose of a figure, the attitude of an arm, the position of a flag. Where no such reproduction is given, and where the picture is not known to the reader, I do not believe that such details very often convey much impression. I shall effect my purpose better if I ask the reader to give thoughtful study to the reproductions, always reserving the admission that no reproduction can be entirely satisfactory or explanatory. I shall have effected it best of all if I can send him to obtain his inspiration before the originals themselves, there perhaps to disagree with me, but not, assuredly, with Holbein. Conversely, wherever such details are employed in the course of this book, I will ask that it shall be understood that they are emphasized because they are either important to the understanding of the picture in question, or because they will sooner or later be needed again, or have distinct connection with some other work from the artist's hands, and not because I believe it necessary in a book of this description to spend time in describing the exact fashion of the coronet of the Madonna, the exact position of the arm in the figure of the Child, the exact angle at which a saint holds his flag, or the exact number of the figures who may kneel at His feet.

The two saints who stand to left and right of this picture are St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, and St. Ursus, the warrior, fit patron saint for Solothurn,¹ whose armourers and swordmakers had made the city famous. It is not, therefore, without reason that Holbein paints for the eyes of the men of Solothurn a soldier in full armour, a splendid manly figure such as they had seen in their streets, and such as wore armour that their own hands had forged. It is a true and very noble, but very simple and scarcely idealized, though finely selected, type of the soldier Swiss or soldier German of the day, done into plain language, to be sure, so that all who passed might read, and yet expressing, as plain language in the hands of a great poet can be made to do, the most poetical ideal. It is the Christian

¹ The Cathedral of Solothurn is dedicated to St. Ursus.

soldier as he should be, perhaps sometimes was, among men who were to wear the armour that Solothurn should make. One can imagine with what craftsman's delight, with what memories of his Augsburg days beside the forge of Lorenz Kolman, Holbein wrought that armour—Maximilian's pattern—that was to be seen and judged by the craftsmen of Solothurn. No painted and gilded futilities for them. It must be armour fit for a man, and a man fit to bear the armour. He is realistic, this St. Ursus of Holbein's—compare him for a moment with the charming ineffectiveness of Perugino's "St. George" in our National Gallery—to this extent, that his armour is of the true craftsmen's sort, the best that muscle and honesty and skill can turn out, the sort of armour that will bear hard knocks, and the man inside it is assuredly of the sort to give them. He is ideal in the sense that he will evoke hero-worship of the best and most wholesome kind in those for whose eyes he was painted.

On the other side of the dais on which the Virgin and Child are placed stands St. Martin of Tours, the soldier who became a bishop, also with good reason a favourite patron in a military land and age, and once again with special reason in Solothurn. It is a singularly beautiful face of quiet, reserved, refined strength in the highest sense, and once more absolutely without the least touch of that aesthetic unreality which makes the most spiritual and most lovely visions of an Angelico or a Filippo Lippi too much of heaven for some sons of earth. It is a face the like of which may be seen, though it very rarely is, among men who have passed through the fire and have been purified by it. And that we may take it again was the kind of ideal that a man of Solothurn might want and be likely to get help from. The soldier and the bishop in Holbein's seeing of them are alike in this, that there is nothing supernatural or unreal in either, nothing that makes them impossible as men, and to men.

And as the craftsmanship of the soldier's armour is beyond reproach from any whose hands found that kind of work to do, so also is the bishop's equipment superbly wrought by the hand of Holbein. If the armour of the fighter was to be worthy of the man who wore it, so, too, shall be the robe of the bishop. But for criticism of Holbein's methods of rendering the broideries that a bishop, a king, a princess might wear, a more fitting place will be found hereafter.

Of the central figure of the group, the Madonna herself, I have purposely deferred mention to the last. Nothing more womanly, more pure, more gentle, more sweet, and yet more strong has been given to us by any painter who has essayed this subject and made us richer by this vision or by that of divine motherhood. It is possible to point to others who have portrayed one of these qualities singly in a greater degree, or who have exhibited even other qualities in more marked degree. I would not be

understood to be exalting Holbein at the expense of other painters. But for all these qualities combined in one embodiment, and inspired with just that touch of the deepest human sympathy which sets up its electric current to the hearts of men, I find it difficult to point to any work, even of the greatest amongst them all, which one can place before this "Madonna of Solothurn" and the later "Madonna of Darmstadt."

We have seen in the last chapter how Holbein saw the Mater Dolorosa touching in himself first, and therefore awakening in others presently the chord of human sympathy, without which no presentment of any ideal ever can become real to us; she is the pure loving mother who has suffered; but the mother of Solothurn is she who has not yet suffered, the young mother absolutely happy in the possession of her child, the type, too, of perfect womanhood, ample, for should not love be ample? her mantle spread broadly, for should not love be all-encircling? the happy smile upon her lips and in her eyes, for should not purity be happy? If the two figures at her side that act as her supporters are types of manly chivalry, she in her turn is the type of helpful womanhood.

It has been said, indeed, that Holbein, who could not have been long married, though we do not know the exact date at which Elsbeth Schmid became his wife, probably had her in his thought as he set down the lines of this noble and sympathetic creation, and that the child upon her knees may represent her first-born. Certainly it is quite consistent with Holbein's love of realizing idealized qualities through their visible human examples, that he should have let his gratitude for his own late gained happiness shine through the type which he was creating of happy motherhood. It was a form of inspired realism, if one may so call it, that belonged to his temperament. But it is hardly possible to arrive at certainty on a point where evidence is practically absent. The evidence of a very beautiful drawing in silver-point which hangs in the Louvre, and is noted by Woltmann in favour of the theory, fails to my mind, first because I am unable to see any likeness therein to the Solothurn face, and secondly because the drawing is not by our Holbein, but by the father, who could never have seen his son's wife. There is no appeal to the splendid portrait of Elsbeth in 1529, sad-faced, heavy-featured, on whom household care and the "*res angusta domi*" have written their lines too plainly. It is difficult, if not impossible, to argue backwards from that portrait to what might have been in 1522. To me the face of the "Solothurn Madonna" seems to be rather the expression of a noble type, which Holbein had built up, partly, no doubt, as all men have to build them, from what he saw most worthy and most beautiful around him, partly, too, from the unconscious inspiration which he had drunk in from the art of men who had gone before. Genius is not independent of these sources. They are the food on which it feeds uncon-

sciously and which it assimilates. Every great painter has always created for himself a type by which you may know him. It is none the less his creation because you may be able to see the genesis of the conception of it in some earlier or even less considerable painter, and may further know that there was some one living face besides which haunted his genius and was with him at his easel. Out of such component elements, indeed, even the greatest of originators have to build up their creations, as Prometheus his man out of clay, but the creation remains their own—a something inspired owing its true life and essence to their genius. But I must return to this subject after we have presently looked at the second great Madonna which Holbein has given us.

Before we pass away, however, from the "Madonna of Solothurn," it will be interesting to observe one or two points in the composition of this picture in which Holbein has shown a bold simplicity which makes it almost unique among the examples of this subject. In the first place, Holbein has so far departed from the almost invariable rule by which painters set the figure of the Virgin at the highest central point of the picture, that he has caused the head of the seated Virgin to be lower on the panel than that of the two saints her supporters. He has in fact made the figure central, and given it the highest place only by virtue of its supreme interest and its dignity. Behind the head of the Virgin he has placed the great open semicircular arch of light, a natural halo—notice that both in this picture and in the "Darmstadt Madonna," and indeed in most of Holbein's religious pictures, the supernatural halo is avoided—which, without forcing its purpose at first upon the mind of the beholder, surrounds the central figure with light and glory. As a mere artistic expedient it is of great value in repeating the circular form which has already twice been given below in the rounded head of the child and the coronet on the head of the mother. Across the great open space thus produced Holbein has thrown two plain iron cross-bars such as might be used to support the masonry of an arch where there was danger of collapse. It has been suggested with plausibility that in the particular church for which the picture was destined there was such an arch, possibly the chancel arch so supported, and it would be quite consistent with Holbein's manner of thought to insert that homely but easily recognized feature, so as to localize as it were the very presence of the Madonna in that very place. It is as if Holbein wanted to say to those who saw, This is no mere abstraction, no mere vision of Heaven impossible to Earth. This is Divine Love shown in the concrete, as you may see and ought to see it every day in every mother and child among you. She wears no nimbus, the air around you and the arches you are under are her nimbus. The interpretation thus suggested seems to me to be quite the true one, and without it one might perhaps find it difficult to

account for why Holbein, who had ready at his finger's end and in his inventive mind every resource of splendid ornament, rich device, and accomplished drawing, chose this strangely simple resource of a pair of iron stanchions beneath a solid arch. I doubt whether before his time there had been one artist of them all who would have dared to have told his great story in words so simple.

But beyond the meaning which Holbein had in using this unexpected setting to his subject—and I believe that in estimating Holbein we must always look for his meaning first, if we are to understand the man—it is easy to see the mere artistic value of this expedient. Two straight iron bars crossing a circle—why did Holbein want them for his composition? Mentally remove them, and the reader will at once see that the great circle of pure air behind the Madonna becomes an empty space in the picture, leaving all the three figures of the group isolated on a lower plane. Replace the bars, and mysteriously the two parts of the picture seem to be once more united; archway, sky, figures and ground have come into one harmony. Those iron bars have in fact done for the artistic construction of the picture what we saw them doing for the mental conception of it. Again, let the reader place his hand just above the higher bar, cutting off the upper part of the semicircle, and leaving a straight line as the boundary of the picture. All sense of the nimbus disappears from the mind, just as all sense of air and space vanishes from the picture. The figures at once become cramped and undignified, tied to the earth on which they stand. Speaking merely of the picture for one moment as a composition destined to produce pleasure to the eye through the proportion, balance, and shapeliness of its parts, those iron cross-bars and that circle are of inestimable service. The horizontal lines repeat the lower straight line of the step on which the Virgin's foot rests, and unite by means of the sympathy which the eye always has for similar forms within distances which it can embrace, the upper and lower parts of the picture. The upper circles do the same by the lower circles, adding spaciousness and relieving the monotony of the mere horizontals, while the vertical descending bars do their part in conjunction with the vertical lines of the pier of the arch to break the subject into pleasant spaces and also to repeat, at the same time that they slightly vary, the lines of the standing figures. Holbein was, it is sometimes said, thinker first, designer afterwards. I would rather say that he was thinker and designer without division of time, the mental conception and the artistic conception going so closely hand in hand that the latter became as much the mere vehicle of the former as the language in which a man is compelled to think—for we cannot realize to ourselves the idea of abstract thought without language—becomes absolutely one with the thought itself; as again the words in which a great poet expresses his conception are simultaneous with the thought itself.

The "Solothurm Madonna" belongs to the year 1522. The other great "Madonna," known as that of Darmstadt, or sometimes as the "Meier Madonna," has been commonly assigned to the year 1526, although I am unable to see any very satisfactory reason why it should not be assigned to any of the years between 1522 and 1526. Beyond the latter we can hardly go, since in that year Holbein left Basel for England, not returning till 1529, and it is hardly probable that the picture should have been painted in or after that year, since by that date things had gone forward in such fashion at Basel that the rival parties, the old Catholic party and the Lutherans, were already under arms, not metaphorically but literally, and the day for painting religious pictures was surely past. We have already, in considering the portraits which Holbein painted in 1516 of Jakob Meier, familiarly known as Jakob zum Hasen, and of his wife, given some account of the man who, having been burgomaster of Basel up to 1521, and having been recognized as the head of the old Catholic party, was in that same year ejected, and a year or so later fined and imprisoned. He was a man of sturdy character, and certainly not inclined to hide his colours, since in the year 1524 we find him as captain of a band of paid volunteers who joined the French king in Italy. He never recovered his position in Basel, and in 1527 the decree which banned him from office was made final. The other branches of his family had espoused the reformed cause, leaving him as the only supporter of his name of the old Catholic party. And this fact will help to explain to us why this masterpiece was allowed in later years to pass out of the family. Jakob Meier had given this commission to Holbein to paint himself and his wife and his children still at the feet of the Mother of Mercy, though it was perhaps his adherence to the cause which to his mind she typified that had brought trouble to his house. We cannot at this distance of time, even in the case of those on whose actions history throws more light than it does on those of this plain burgomaster of Basel, pretend to pass infallible verdicts on the motives and the acts of men. But as we look at this picture and remember the circumstances under which it was painted, we feel pretty safe in saying that Jakob Meier zum Hasen was at least staunch to his faith as he knew it. We lose sight of him after the year 1529; we should, indeed, have lost sight of him for ever, or rather say we should never even have heard of him but for this picture of Holbein's. One cannot grudge him the immortality which he gained from it.

The picture, like the first owner, passed through many vicissitudes. I may spare the reader the detailed evidences,¹ documentary and other, of its wanderings, and be content with recording the ascertained facts. It is heard of early in the seventeenth century as belonging to the Fesch family, who

¹ These will be found in Dr. Woltmann's "Holbein and his Times" by anyone who desires to verify them.

had inherited it from their ancestress, Anna Meier, the eldest girl who kneels beside her mother in the picture. It passed from the Fesch family to Lucas Iselin, and thence to one Le Blond, a painter, who purchased it at the price of 3,000 gulden, nominally for the dowager Marie dei Medici, then living in Belgium. The picture never passed into her possession, but became the property of one Lossert, at whose sale in October, 1709, at Amsterdam, it was sold for 2,000 florins. What became of it thenceforward is not known. But in 1822 it reappeared in the hands of a French dealer, who sold it for 2,500 thalers to Prince William of Prussia, from whom it passed to its present resting-place in the palace at Darmstadt. Meanwhile the fine copy which is now at Dresden, and which had been purchased at Venice, had long been considered to be an original picture from the hand of Holbein. But that same picture has been traced back to Amsterdam, and it has become tolerably certain that during the time when the original picture was at Amsterdam this copy was made by some painter, probably of the Dutch school, who, departing in some particulars from his original, yet preserved on the whole no small share of the spirit of Holbein's great work. When, at the exhibition of Holbein's collected works some years ago, the two pictures could be examined side by side, all doubt was removed. It will probably be long before such an opportunity occurs again, but Darmstadt is no far pilgrimage from Dresden, and if the journey be made from one to the other while the impression of either picture is still fresh in the mind, the superiority of the Darmstadt picture at all points will not for one moment be contested. It may be added that the original picture has suffered remarkably little from the effects of time. The cleaning off of the old varnish some years ago was happily unattended by any injury, and there can be no better testimony to the sound and simple craftsmanship of the master than the condition of this masterpiece after three hundred and seventy years of existence.

Once more I absolve myself from the necessity of enumerating details and describing poses which anyone may examine for himself. On the other hand, I may do wisely by drawing attention to one or two points of difference between the original and the copy which might easily escape notice, and, since a thousand know the picture only through the Dresden copy, where not more than a score have seen the Darmstadt original, I have thought it best to reproduce both, merely cautioning the reader that the Darmstadt picture, being fuller in tone and less hard in its line, does, in spite of clearer definition in some portions of it, suffer by reproduction far more than the copy suffers. The most important difference lies in the fact that the copyist, evidently dissatisfied with Holbein's type, has sought to give what appeared to him to be increase of gracefulness by several expedients, such as diminishing slightly the size of the head, so as to make the figure seem taller. Furthermore, he has

raised the two side portions of the picture by increasing the distance between the heads of the kneeling figures and the top of the frame. And he has greatly increased the height of the central canopy, so as to leave more space above the Madonna's coronet. The kneeling figures are almost of the same size in either picture, and the figure of the Virgin herself is not actually taller in the copy, the appearance of greater height being obtained merely by the change of proportion. In the actual portraits of the donor and his family the copyist has evidently sought to be accurate. In his painting of the details he has allowed himself freedom. Thus the carpet on which the group kneels differs considerably in colour and somewhat in actual pattern. In the copy its colours are more strongly contrasted, they include more of black and of red, and there are small points of difference in the design, while the whole stands out in clearer and harsher definition. The carpet in the original is of softly harmonized and perfectly blended tints, such as occur in an originally fine oriental carpet which time has helped. Indeed, the colour throughout the Dresden is, when compared with that of the Darmstadt picture, harsher and more assertive. The dress of the "Dresden Madonna" is of a somewhat harder darkish green-blue—a colour due probably to the fact that at the time when the copy was made the varnish of the original had yellowed by time, and had caused the blue robe to assume a greenish tinge. Naturally, too, the crimson girdle comes against this colour with a somewhat more assertive note. The red of the elder brother's stockings is of a somewhat brighter red in the copy, and the flesh tints are ruddier and less subtly modelled. The handling of the golden-coloured sleeve of the Virgin's dress is in the original a piece of superb technical achievement, as rich and satisfying as if it had come from the hand of a Venetian. In the copy it is comparatively frigid. Indeed, without dispraising too severely the work of the copyist at Dresden, which is really of great merit and probably as good and as sympathetic with its original as any copy can ever be, one may see that he encountered and partially, but not wholly mastered that problem of reconciling slightly antagonistic colours which had quite ceased to give Holbein himself the slightest difficulty. Holbein's colouring in this picture is once more wholly his own. He does not evolve rich and splendid harmonies, as the Venetians did, out of colours which when looked at one at a time are found to be not high in scale, but he employs those contrasts of colour to which his eye had always been used, since they were of the German wear of the day, and subdues them till they yield him a result which, though it is quite unlike that of the Venetians, is yet not less harmonious, although less gorgeous and less sensuous than theirs. But he is a difficult man to follow in this. And those who attempted to follow him in it, or who, without any attempt to follow him in it, yet had to face the same problems of colour in the German school of the day—Hans Baldung, for example—



The Meer Madonna.
Darmstadt.

show us at times how much easier it was to be crude than to be harmonious. The copyist who achieved the Dresden version is not to be accused of crudity nor inharmonious colouring, far from it, but if the two pictures could be again set side by side the mastery of Holbein would at once assert itself.

I would also call attention to one more detail. In dealing with the earliest set of Passion paintings at Basel, especially the "Scourging," I asked the reader to notice the strong dark outline which Holbein used around his figures and indeed around all objects. This line was never, as we then said, wholly abandoned by him. The Dresden copyist has reduced it to a minimum, especially around the hands. In the Darmstadt original it is clearer, stronger, and darker, not very thick, but very firm and unhesitating.

There is one further small point of distinction which, since it connects itself with a feature of Holbein's work, may with profit be recorded. If any genuine picture by Holbein be examined, whether of his earliest period in Basel or of his latest period in England, where he has to deal with any kind of pattern such as was involved in the intricacies of embroidery, it is invariably worked out with a precision so exact that no thread is wanting, but that a continuous and firm tracing can be made of it without missing a stitch. His practice in this respect is wholly unlike to that of the later painters—Velazquez, Franz Hals, Van Dyck, or even to that of the contemporary Venetians, who summarize and suggest to the eye a rich pattern by a few masterly strokes, which the eye takes up and unconsciously continues for itself. Neither method is righter than the other. But Holbein's method, supremely expressive in his hands, is in the hands of any man of less genius apt to degenerate into mere laborious accuracy, or to take the place and usurp the interest in the picture which ought to be left for the products of the higher imagination. With Holbein it never so degenerates. It is to him the natural and only method of expressing himself—absolute perfection of craftsmanship in all that he handles carried into every part of the picture and yet all of it so kept in due relation and due subordination because of the dominating presence of the higher interests and aims of the picture that you are unconscious until you begin purposely to forget these higher interests in order to search into his way of doing things that you are looking at a work in which industry and perfect craftsmanship have borne their part in carrying out the master-thought. There are other ways of doing it, no less worthy to be admired in art which is differently constructed, but this was Holbein's way, and so far as I know there is no exception to it in all his work. We shall come upon it again in the latest of his English portraits, as we came upon it in the broideries of his first Dorothea Kannengiesser. And if the test be applied to these two pictures which we are now considering it will be found that the Darmstadt picture presents this characteristic of Holbein's technical method in every particular.

It may be tested most easily in the yellow embroidery on the *camicia* of the girl, whereas in the copy the pattern is halting, tremulous and disconnected. The question is one of detail, and I must not allow it any longer to withhold us from the view of the higher interests of the picture.¹

In the "Solothurn Madonna" Holbein in his conception of St. Ursus and St. Martin was, as we have seen, called upon to create two types which should be convincing by reason of their embodying those qualities in a visible form which should be the outward signs, as they are usually seen by men, of the character within. They were to be portraits of character rather than portraits of individuals. In the "Meier Madonna" he was spared that necessity, and he could indulge his unrivalled power of presenting individuality in actual portrait. The task which had now been set him was, in a certain sense, the converse of that which he had set himself at Solothurn. He had in that to create an ideal for a community; this was to be a presence for a home. The supporters of that Madonna were to be the type of the men by whose strength a city is made strong; the supporters of this Madonna were to be those whose wisdom establishes the house. He was indeed to create for us the Madonna of the House. How far he has done that for us can be felt only by those who have stood before that picture. I doubt if it can be understood by any other means.

Holbein has to make his point of departure the six portraits of the Meier household. They must be real, living, as far as he can make them so. Holbein can accept from himself nothing short of that—does not, indeed, dream of accepting anything short of it, even if Jakob Meier had been ready to consent. The picture is for the comfort of him, and for his, and not in this case for others except by accident. Therefore they need a perpetual record that they are living in the presence of the Gracious Mother and her Divine Son, and they want also to feel that Mother and Son are there among them in a presence that they can realize, and in daily sympathy with them and their home. She must therefore, Holbein feels, be neither shadowy nor vaguely spiritual, not removed by any aethereal beauty nor supernatural attributes (she wears no halo) above the head of the pure domestic affections and the pure family life. She must be close to them and they to her, and the bond of this closeness will be brought home rather to the sympathy than to the mind by the reality of the love which he can create through his vision of the Virgin and her Child. She stands upon no dais or throne, her feet are on the same level as that of the others, and her throne is the carpet—probably exact to its original—of Jakob Meier's house.

¹ It is very interesting to find that among the Russian peasantry, whose simple broderies for their own domestic use still retain the best qualities of the art, one particular stitch is known still as the Holbein stitch, the name being of course carried over to them from the German provinces.

STUDY FOR JAKOB MEIER

BASEL



^{H.}
IACOBUS MEIERUS CONSUL REIP. BASIL.

She walks the house with them. If she had stood on throne or dais she would not have done that. She is above them only because they have knelt to do reverence to the highest and holiest type of pure womanhood. She is, so to speak, as tangible as they, and as real as they, the real and the ideal meeting as they often do, the ideal being made possible to our love and to our understanding through the real.

But Holbein in thus creating a type which is in the highest sense womanly, and which moves us and holds us through its appeal to the highest human sympathies, does not in this realization omit the element which shall also show her to us as queenly. Indeed, I have never stood before a picture which so bows the heart and compels reverence of feeling as this. Something perhaps in the simple representation of plain and by no means beautiful people kneeling in utter reverence, they and their household, before that embodiment of queenly womanhood and of trusting childhood, moves one as no idealizing of these wholly in earnest burgher folk would have done. The faces and the figures of these manly worshippers tell their tale in a way which gets its echo out of any heart. The faces of Meier and of his wife are incomparable pieces of portraiture given under the effect of strong and true emotion. There is no graceful attitudinizing, no theatrical display, and no ecstatic piety in the magistrate of Basel and his wife. Remember that in this picture Holbein, himself a northerner, was painting the temperament of the northerner, of the Teutonic, not of the Italian race. Emotion runs deep but still among that people. South of the Alps and among the Latin races feeling, none the less true, expresses itself with less reserve and with more outward and visible sign of passionate emotion. For my own part I am glad that Holbein was drawn to the north and not to the south, since much contact with Italian art might have perhaps robbed us of one who looked at the people and the feelings of his North with that single eye which borrowed little or nothing of colour, gesture, motive from the South. We needed such a man to tell us what was in us, and to tell us that the Italian races and Latin influences had no monopoly in the production of the men who can be called the great ones in art. And save that at the day of his appearing the world was out of joint for the time being, it may be that he would have given us many another masterpiece, not indeed finer than these two Madonnas, for I hardly think that possible, but capable of bowing the heart, just as Raphael and other painters gave us not one but many which still move the heart of men. But Holbein, by the accident of place and time, when the whole of northern Europe was upheaving for the Reformation, was asked for no more Madonnas, and was driven to live by the portraits of the men and of the women who played their part in that great historical drama. We may be grateful enough for that. We wanted to know what the men and women of

our Tudor day were like. It is our own fault if we do not. But the Madonnas of Solothurn and of Darmstadt show us that which men and women of all races, of all types and of all times, will always want to see, the vision of true and manly reverence before a high ideal shown to us by a supremely great artist. And as one turns away from this Madonna, and knows that it was the last which Holbein was to paint, it is impossible not to feel that the man had in him still further messages of grandeur and of beauty for which men of all creeds would have been the richer if he might have sent them to us.

The Madonna herself in this picture is true queen and true mother in one. She is crowned as a queen should be, and she wears her crown with a queenly modesty. Womanly in her attitude and mien, holding the Child with the tenderest handling of love, while she looks down both at Him and at those who kneel at her feet. The Child's face indeed is somewhat sad and worn, which gave rise to the sweet unauthorized legend that the picture represents a thank-offering for the recovery of Meier's youngest boy. The idea, and it is so graceful that one wishes it had been true, was that Holbein has represented the Madonna as taking the sick child in her arms while she restores to the Meier family their boy in good health. The idea is of modern origin and without authority. More probably the look of sadness in the Divine Child's face is set there of deliberate intent. It is the foreshadow in the young Child of the future Man of Sorrows. The legend arose doubtless among those to whom the Dresden version alone was familiar, and it has been urged that if they had known the original they would not have been tempted to have framed the legend; one writer even speaks of the child in the "Darmstadt Madonna" as "the happy child" in the Virgin's arms. It is quite true that in the Dresden copy the worn look on the Child's face is much emphasized, but I think it certainly exists also in a quite appreciable degree, and I think of deliberate intention, in the "Darmstadt Madonna."

It may be claimed for these two great Madonnas by Holbein, of Solothurn and of Darmstadt, that they are amongst the most individual and original conceptions which occur in the whole range of art. The type which he created is his own, stamped with his own greatness, and eloquent of his own personality. As an original thinker, indeed, he may claim place beside the greatest in Art—may claim to stand with those very few who have expressed for the world of all time the greatest ideas in the greatest language, and have yet remained themselves in the expression of them. For to be original in any form of Art, whether it be sculpture or painting or letters or music, is to approach the existing spiritual and physical materials of life, not in such a way as to alter those materials, to distort, to falsify or to parody them, but in such a way as to show the material, to exhibit the thought from a standpoint which shall be felt to be the thinker's own, and not a mere copy or a following of somebody else. It is rather a great and independent

STUDY FOR DOROTHEA KANNENGIESSER

BASEL



Holstein ad viv. del. a
DOROTHEA KANNENGIESSER, UXOR JAC. MEIERI COS-BAS.

way of seeing old facts than a way of showing to the world something which is quite new and strange about its spiritual and physical humanity. It cannot be independent of its material, nor can it create new material, but it can see the hitherto unseen facts, beauties, sympathies which still underlie the old material, and which lie there, moreover, in such unexhausted quantity that there is room yet, and always will be as the ages go forward, for original thinkers—always some thoughts still waiting which have never been thought before. And so if we take the men whom by common consent we have learnt to regard as both great and original—Shakespeare, Dante, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Beethoven, and a very few more—I say, both great and original, since there are men who may claim to be original and beautiful, as Piero della Francesca, who yet are hardly great, and there are men who can claim to be great and yet are not original, as Raphael—if we take that little sacred band of great original creators, we shall find that their originality in no wise lay in their casting aside all previous material which had inspired other men and been used by them; it did not lie in the refusing well-worn themes because there was nothing more to be said about them, nor in the rejection of all the motives which had become the common stock of painters, poets, sculptors ever since men painted or carved or sang. Their originality consisted in seeing greatness, spiritual beauty, or even mere physical beauty where the crowd of smaller men who had trod that path before had seen things smaller or seen them in a smaller way. Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is not less an original creation of genius because he built it out of older material. The "Last Judgement" of the Sistine is not less one of the original masterpieces of the world because Orcagna and Angelico and others had made the same subject already one of the common themes of Art. We can even sometimes see in these men who had been their heroes and what they had most admired in that which had been done before them. We can even here and there see at what fountains they had drunk. For no man, however great and however original, is independent of his impressions. And no artist, however great, owes nothing to those who have gone before.

Can we see in Holbein, through these two Madonnas, what admirations and what preferences had gone to shape the ideal of beauty and dignity which he gives to us? Are we able to trace any influences that seem to have reached him from any other school or master? In the chapter on Swabian art I pointed out how the influences of that school probably descended to it from the Flemish painters, and especially Roger Van der Weyden, through Martin Schongauer. When Holbein left his father's home at Augsburg he was, perhaps, a Swabian. We know too little about his art at that moment to assert too strongly. But in his first-known little picture of the Virgin, painted when he was a boy, the type does not differ

essentially from that which his father would have used. But when we look at these two great Madonnas of Holbein, and especially at the last of the two, we have something so different from the ordinary sentiment of the Swabian school that we feel at once that Holbein was now in no sense of that school. And yet Holbein has not broken so completely with all previous traditions and all previous ideals that we can say as we look at the Meier Madonna that she is absolutely unlike anything we have ever seen before. It happened to me to pass directly from a visit to Darmstadt to the Exhibition of Primitive Flemish Art at Bruges in 1902. And that visit strengthened in me an earlier impression that I could trace in Holbein's Madonnas a feeling which is more directly akin to the Flemish school than to the German school which was derived from it. The similarity of feeling and of type suggests itself in many painters of that school, but in the case of one painter, whose works were seen together in some quantity for the first time, the inspiration of the two men seemed to have something in common which made the similarity of type more than accidental. The painter in question is Gerard David, one who has hitherto, I believe, not been appealed to as a direct influence upon Holbein. I would especially mention the "Madonna surrounded by Saints and Angels," which is one of the chief treasures of the museum at Rouen.¹ I do not think that anyone who thoroughly knew the Darmstadt Holbein can fail, as he looks at this masterpiece of the Flemish painter, to be at once reminded by something in the feeling and in the type of the Madonna, and even in such details as the choice of crown and robe, in the outspread mantle, in the fashion of the robe, in the wavy golden hair lying along the shoulder, and in the pose of the head as she looks down at the Child, of the greater German master. Holbein's is a stronger, more intensely sympathetic, more real and convincing vision; but the original type seems to be common to both men.

Now Gerard David of Oudewater was a much older man than Holbein. He had been admitted to the Guild of St. Luke at Bruges so early as 1484, thirteen years before Holbein was born. And in 1509 he had given this very picture of the "Madonna amidst the Virgin Saints" to the church of the Carmelites in that city, where the picture remained for 300 years. It is difficult to see how Holbein could have seen either that picture, or indeed any picture by David before the year 1526. If we might suppose that the date usually assigned to the Darmstadt Madonna were incorrect, and we could date it after Holbein's return from his first journey to England, the difficulty would disappear. It is not only possible but most probable that Holbein, who spent several months in or about Antwerp on his way to England in 1526, visited so great a centre of art as Bruges, and, indeed, either

¹ See an excellent reproduction in the "Portfolio" monograph, December, 1875, on Gerard David, by Mr. W. H. James Weale.

STUDY FOR ANNA MEIER

BASEL



J. Hübner del.

FILIA IACOBI MEIERI COS. BASIL.

in going to or returning from England, Bruges lies at a very short distance from his probable point of departure and arrival, namely, Flushing. But it must be admitted that, though there is no documentary or other direct evidence in favour of the "Meier Madonna" having been painted in 1526 or before it, the date of Holbein's return to Basel in 1528 is less probable, because by that time the religious question had burnt to a white heat and men had already put on their armour in no metaphorical sense. The giving and accepting of a commission for the picture at such a moment are less probable than at the earlier date, though I do not think we can quite assert that they were impossible.

There is yet another possibility which must be considered. It has often been suggested—where a visit to Italy is involved we shall consider the question presently—that Holbein during the ten years of his sojourn at Basel may have travelled somewhat widely in search of art and possibly also in hope of commissions. One such journey as far as Lyons is certainly known, and there may have been others. It hardly seems probable, however, that he should have wandered as far as Bruges, since, if he had done so, he must assuredly also have visited Antwerp, where he would have made the acquaintance of Quentin Matsys. In 1526, however, when he starts for England, we find him taking a letter of introduction from Erasmus to Matsys as if it were his first visit thither, which shows that no such acquaintance had previously been made. But without going so far as Bruges, he might in his wanderings have touched some point northwards where Flemish art was to be seen and where his admiration was aroused. Nor again is it impossible that works by Gerard David and the great Flemings may have found their way to Basel. But neither of the last two suppositions, we must observe, would bring Holbein in contact with that particular picture of the "Madonna with the Virgin Saints," which was safely sheltered since 1509 in the church of the Carmelites at Bruges. None of the three possibilities save the first—the postdating of the "Meier Madonna"—will make it possible for Holbein to have seen that picture by Gerard David before he found his own ideal. It is of course in no way necessary to limit the possible influence to this or to any single picture or single master of the school. It may have grown out of an acquaintance with some work or works of the Flemish school which gave the first direction to Holbein's preference, and which he unconsciously incorporated, as men do, into his own ideal. It is even possible that the similarity of type may be pure coincidence, an ideal developed quite independently by two men who both derived the first inspirations of their youth from an earlier ideal which descended to each by a different channel. The question is one of great interest and very suggestive in the history of Holbein's art, but it is not one on which absolute certainty can be arrived at in the absence of more definite evidence.

The original studies for three of the Meier family in this group, for Jakob Meier, for Dorothea Kannengiesser and for the daughter Anna Meier, are preserved in the gallery at Basel and are reproduced in this volume. We shall have later opportunities of examining Holbein's methods in his preliminary studies when we come to deal with the great Windsor series. For the present it is enough to say that these earlier studies are as delightful in their artistic quality, as consummate in their seizure of character, and as simple and as masterly in their handling as anything which he ever accomplished. The studies for the other persons—of whom the woman who kneels next the Madonna is believed to be Holbein's first wife—are unhappily lost. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that rich as the collection at Basel is in the early treasure of Holbein's opening period, it is hardly to be supposed that it represents more than a twentieth part of that which he produced in that period, since it is composed practically of the examples which one man, Boniface Amerbach, to his honour had gathered, the salvage from the wreck which time, fanaticism, neglect and folly have made of the works of an incomparable artist.

CHAPTER X

SOME OTHER PICTURES

BEFORE we leave the first Basel period of Holbein's art and follow him to England, it will be useful, for the sake of completeness, to devote a short chapter to a few pictures which bear, some rightly and some with more doubtful claim, his name in various galleries, and which, if they are from his hand at all, could only have been executed by him in these earlier days. I have already explained that I must postpone his work for the wood-engravers and the publishers, as well as his work for the goldsmith and the jeweller, for special treatment at the end of the book. It will, therefore, be only at this point necessary to say that the bulk of his book illustration and of his designs for woodcuts was executed before his departure in 1526 for England, including the famous designs for the Old and New Testaments, the "Alphabet of Death," and above all the so-called "Dance of Death" series, in which his power of imagination and his dramatic force reach their highest level. I suggested at the end of the last chapter that of those eleven years of his Basel period we possess but a very small salvage, and it is an unwelcome task to have to diminish the tale of genuine pictures by him. But it is an unfortunate fact that no man has suffered so much from that spontaneous tribute to his value, which consists in attributing to him the inferior work of other men. It was computed by Waagen that of all the pictures in England ascribed to Holbein not more than two out of every seven could be consented to as genuine. The liberal recantations that have taken place in the last twenty years in foreign galleries have still left not a few upon their walls that give the spectator pause. The issue, indeed, is often obscured by the fact that restoration has so dulled and clouded the surface of the picture, that one great means of verification has been obliterated. I shall make no attempt to examine any considerable quantity of these doubtful works either in public or private, English or foreign galleries. To do so would be to prolong this book to inordinate length and to intolerable dullness. It is no part of the scheme of these pages to analyze the whole of Holbein's work, or even the majority of them. Neither, I trust, will the reader ask me in the course of them to give any preference to English examples over foreign, nor to rarely seen examples in private hands above those which are accessible to all in public galleries. The aim of this book is to select the most typical and most excellent examples of Holbein's work

along the whole course of his life, or those which, though not so desirable, illustrate some special point of his characteristics, or show his connection with or separation from the art of other men. And if this book should succeed, which is almost more than I dare hope, in engaging the interest of any who have not before studied Holbein with deep attention, then by sending them to the presence of the man himself in the pictures which he certainly did paint, I shall have led them to form their own standard for judging of what he did not paint, and shall avoid cumbering my pages with very dreary detail.

In Hampton Court Gallery is a very interesting and very meritorious picture of "The Saviour and Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre." This picture is one which, in a gallery of fictitious Holbeins, has far more claim to respect than most which bear his name there. It was not one of the English examples which were sent to represent the painter at the exhibition of his collected works at Darmstadt in 1871, but it was one of those which were shown in the very interesting Winter Exhibition of Old Masters at Burlington House in 1880. Opinions are, however, still divided as to its authenticity. It has been accepted by competent judges as the work of Holbein, and it has been rejected by others whose opinion has equal weight. Dr. Woltmann, indeed, goes so far as to name the painter, Bartolomaeus Bruyn, to whom he would assign it. The picture has suffered by injury and by restoration, but neither on the grounds of its design nor of its technique do I find myself able to accept it as a work of Holbein. That it is the work of a painter of the German school who had probably seen and been deeply influenced by the grave and earnest works of Holbein at Basel, one may readily concede. But the picture, which, if it were by Holbein, would have to be assigned to one of the years between 1516 and 1526, possesses exactly some of those very traits which, while they still remained characteristic of the German school, had not survived in the work, even in the early work, of Holbein. In this connection I would draw attention to the angular and uncouth projection of the forward leg in the figure of our Lord, an exaggeration which is repeated with even more unnatural emphasis in the distant figure of St. Peter as he walks and gesticulates at the side of St. John. The action, moreover, of the hands of the chief figure, intended to be expressive of the "Noli me tangere," is somewhat exaggerated and theatrical. It should be compared with the Passion series at Basel already dealt with, from which three reproductions are given in this book. The figure, too, of Mary Magdalene, though graceful and pleasing, is of too studied a gracefulness and of too superficial an earnestness to convince us of Holbein's design. If careful attention be given to the cast of the drapery in that figure, it will be found to be gracefully impossible. It neither hangs by its own weight, nor is it thrown out into the naturally vigorous lines



Volte me laquer
a. Luerbel to: W. Chua & Knapton Blvd

which the hasty action of the figure would necessarily have produced. I cannot believe that Holbein would have given us a figure of so much studied grace and of so little force. And be it remembered that those who accept this as a design by Holbein would place it within the period which produced the Passion series just mentioned, the "Solothurn Madonna" and the "Meier Madonna." I would also notice the presence of the halo around the Saviour's head as a feature which is generally omitted by Holbein when he deals with any actual incident in the history of the Saviour. When we come to the technical details of the picture, it is right to repeat the admission that the force of the negative evidence is greatly obscured by the fact that the picture has been much retouched. If we could accept the handling of the trees, for example, as we now see it, as the original work of the painter, we should at once pronounce that Holbein had no share in it. It is what one of his admirers a few years later would have described as "mere slubbered work" compared to his. The elaborate painting of the vase which the Magdalene holds has been appealed to as evidence of Holbein's craftsmanship. I find myself quite unable to see in it the same masterly handling which is visible in Holbein's undoubted work of the period, as, for example, in the "Man of Sorrows" and "Mater Dolorosa" already described.

To the date of 1522 are assigned two upright panels representing St. Ursula and St. George, which are to be found in the Carlsruhe Gallery, and which are figured in several works which deal with Hans Holbein. I cannot accept these weak and slightly affected figures as the work of the man who in that year was producing the St. Ursus and the St. Martin of the "Solothurn Madonna."

A portrait of some merit, though of no great strength, hangs in the Darmstadt Grand Ducal Gallery.¹ It represents a young man in a deep crimson under-vest and scarlet mantle against a bright blue background. It is in my opinion the work, and not a bad example, of Ambros Holbein, in spite of the inscription, which has the monogram "H H" and the date 1515. This inscription is painted on a white band which runs across the bottom of the panel, and could easily have been inserted at a subsequent period, as unhappily was not unfrequently done in the case of a painter whose works from the very first had a greater value than those of any of his contemporaries with the one exception of Albrecht Dürer. Comparison should be made between this picture and the portrait of Hans Herbster which formerly belonged to Lord Northbrook, and was attributed to Hans Holbein, and has since 1898 hung in the Basel Gallery, and has been restored to its true author, Ambros Holbein.

Of different and far greater interest is a drawing which hangs in the collection at Basel, and of whose authorship there has never been any doubt.

¹ See "Holbein," H. Knackfuss. Grevel and Co., London, 1899, p. 8.

It is slightly but forcibly handled in black chalk touched with colour, and it is generally accepted, though not quite without question, as a portrait of Holbein from his own hand. It was once the property of Bonifacius Amerbach, and formed part of the Amerbach Collection. Where doubt is expressed, as in this case, as to the identity of the person who is represented in a portrait, there is no final solution of the doubt possible except by appeal to some other undoubted portrait of the same individual at about the same age. Unhappily we have nothing of the kind to appeal to. For my own part, I find, after careful comparison of this portrait with the two portraits of Holbein as a child at Augsburg by his father and with the silver-point drawing from the same hand of the two brothers, no difficulty in believing that we have here a portrait of the great painter himself. The portraits of Holbein as a child and as a boy have very marked peculiarities, one of which is the great breadth of the face at the upper level of the cheek bones, the strongly defined jaw and chin, and the general massiveness of the head. And these features are visible also in the Basel portrait, so that to an eye which is used to the changes which take place in individuals as they pass from boyhood to manhood the identity of the four portraits will not seem at all difficult to accept. The Basel portrait in question, which is a broadly and slightly touched sketch in black chalk heightened with colour, is very convincing as a rendering of a young man, whether it be Holbein or no, of some twenty to five and twenty years old. It is a quiet and self-possessed face of considerable power, the round and massive skull, the great breadth across the cheek bones, and the well-built, capacious and upright forehead, together with the firm mouth and powerful jaw, all reminding us of the type which from time to time in Germany has been repeated among the possessors of great intellectual power, as in Ludwig von Beethoven, in Goethe, and in many another. The internal evidence of the face itself indeed may fairly be said to be in favour of its authenticity.

There are in that same gallery at Basel, from which we have so often had to quote during the early years of Holbein's career, two small panels which, though they can hardly claim great importance on their own merits, are yet of some interest, since they serve to introduce the question of the influence of Italian art upon the great German. The two panels represent apparently the same young woman. The first of these is a portrait of a fair-haired girl (photographic reproduction conveys both in this and in the companion picture the idea of dark hair and complexion), very richly attired in a slashed crimson velvet boddice with sleeves of old gold colour, who holds up with one hand a skirt of the blue tone such as Raphael used in the "*Belle Jardinière*" and the "*Madonna del Cardellino*." In front of her is a stone ledge of a balcony or window, on which lies a heap of gold coins, while her right hand is stretched forward with a gesture which obviously demands a



PORTRAIT OF A MAN
TRADITIONALLY THAT OF HOLBEIN BY HIMSELF
BASEL



Imago Piet. celeberr. IOHANN HOLBEIN ejus demque opus.

further supply. If the meaning of the picture remained in doubt that doubt is removed by the inscription on the front of the stone ledge, "*Lais Corinthiaca*, 1526." The other picture is similar in handling, colour, and general style, but it represents the same person in the character of Venus with a small child as Cupid in front of her.

These pictures will at once strike anyone who knows them, either through the originals or through the reproductions, as differing in a very marked manner from anything else which we know to have come from the hand of Holbein, and they have given rise to widely different opinions concerning their origin, which may be classified as follows: Rumohr believes them to be the work of a Netherlandish artist; Wornum puts them down to an unknown Milanese painter; Waagen believes them to have been painted by Holbein under Netherlandish influence; Woltmann assigns them unhesitatingly to Holbein himself, and Knackfuss agrees to the latter ascription. It is worth mentioning, as an example of how history is made, that Woltmann remarks without reserve that the perfection of the execution "shows that Holbein had received a commission for them yielding a satisfactory recompense," while Knackfuss goes a step farther and asserts that there can be no possible doubt as to the relations which existed between Holbein and the lady, since she is depicted as *Lais*, and the inference is obvious that Holbein must have been the *Apelles* in the case. The reader will not ask me to analyze the value of such very gratuitous conclusions.

The inventory of the collection made by Basilius Amerbach, long after the death both of Holbein and of Bonifacius Amerbach, states that the panel is a portrait of a lady of the house of Offenburg. And curious investigators have discovered that there was a certain Dorothea Offenburg who figures in the Basel divorce court, and who would not be seriously libelled perhaps by being identified with *Lais Corinthiaca*.

The inventory assigns the portrait to Holbein. It is, however, necessary to point out that the said inventory is by no means infallible. It was not drawn up by the original owner and collector, nor were its particulars registered till fifty years and more had passed since the pictures were first collected, and we know only too well what apparently incredible mistakes are made in perfect good faith when catalogues of pictures are drawn up under such circumstances. It is not improbable that Bonifacius Amerbach possessed works that had not been painted by Holbein, or even that such works should have got themselves added to the collection without having belonged to Amerbach. And on the authorship of the picture, and even on the identity of the subject—which latter piece of information may be due simply to unconfirmed gossip—I hold that the evidence of the inventory is of but slight authority. It will be safest to judge of the correctness of their attribution to Hans Holbein on the internal evidence of the pictures themselves.

I may say at once that I am quite unable to see any Netherlandish influence or probable authorship in the pictures. On the other hand, I see the strongest evidence of Lombard influence, and that in so direct a fashion and to such a degree that I believe them to be the work of some Lombard artist who had come under the influence of the later work of Raphael. The name of Cesare da Sesto at once occurs to one, and if it were not for the date 1526 on the Lais picture there would be no great difficulty in accepting it as a work by him which had found its way across from Milan—possibly even in the pack of Holbein himself. But Cesare da Sesto died, it is said, at Milan in 1524. Inscriptions, especially on pictures attributed to Holbein, are, it might be urged, easy to add. But if this inscription were an added forgery the forger would have, if he had any honest intent, surely gone one step further and have added Holbein's monogram, as was done, in my opinion, with the Darmstadt portrait. To assign it therefore to Cesare da Sesto may be narrowing the ascription of the picture too closely to a single name, whereas the works bear the character which was impressed upon many followers of the Lombard school. One more difficulty must be fairly stated. In the picture of "Venus and Cupid" it will be at once seen that the child, who in the original has red hair, strongly resembles the type of child which occurs in the "Meier Madonna" and also in the younger child in the group of Holbein's wife and children painted in 1529.¹ The type is so peculiar and so unlike that which we find in the Lombard school to which the face of the woman attaches itself, that I believe that it is due to a subsequent alteration and repainting of the child over the older work, so as to make it conform to Holbein's type. It is even conceivable that Holbein may have actually inserted the figure of the child there *de novo* to turn it into a picture of "Venus and Cupid," and in experimenting on these pictures to endeavour to form a conclusion, I have found that if the child with its arrows be entirely removed from the picture, there remains the figure of the woman very much resembling the attitude and motive of the Lais—one hand outstretched and one probably gathering up the folds of the skirt. If the original picture is examined it will be found that there is nothing to make this view impossible on the score of technique.

The position may be stated thus: It is as difficult to see Holbein in the two pictures of the woman, as it is to see anyone but Holbein in the picture of the child. Now if we take the view, with Woltmann and others, that both works are wholly by Holbein, nothing is more certain than this, that he was consciously and of deliberate intent for the moment painting in imitation of the Milanese school, and that with so much success that he has misled not

¹ Upon the old frame of this picture are found the words in Latin, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever"—a quotation which is as difficult to explain in reference to the subject as the characteristics of the picture itself.

DOROTHEA OFFENBURG IN THE CHARACTER OF VENUS

BASEL



a few into believing them to be the actual work of a Milanese. And in that case we have to ask ourselves this question: Since Holbein shows himself possessed of sufficient skill and trick of imitation to completely realize the type which he was imitating in the case of the woman, how came it that he was unable or unwilling to carry out his imitation to the point of also giving us a child of the Milanese type, whereas the child which he has given to us is of the Holbeinesque type? If, however, my explanation may be accepted, the difficulty disappears. Holbein possessing, or seeing in possession of Amerbach, these two small examples, very similar in attitude and motive, inserts into one of them a figure of a child, which gives some variety, and enables him to attach a fresh subject to the somewhat trivial action of the picture. I should for my own part also think it highly probable that to the other picture he had added the coins on the window sill and the title "*Lais Corinthia*," so as to turn a somewhat unmeaning picture of a woman into a quasi-classical personality. The Offenburg tradition I should wholly reject, nor indeed can I persuade myself that these pictures are portraits by Holbein either of that shadowy lady or of any other lady whatever. They appear to me to be pictures, not of some well-marked personality, but merely Lombard school types. Let the reader who knows Holbein's portraiture, with its extraordinary invariable grasp of the individual in each case, ask himself if these are Holbein's portraits of a young German woman of his day. And I would also draw attention to the fact that these pictures to be by Holbein must have been painted by him in about the year 1526, by which date he had painted the "*Solothurn Madonna*" and probably also the "*Meier Madonna*." Can we conceive any particular motive which Holbein could have had in that hour of his strength and his individuality in choosing to paint this young woman, who presumably had some character in her face, under the trivial guise of a second-rate Lombard type? If he was prepared to paint the likeness of a not very estimable lady, why should he shrink from painting her, as he painted all his other known portraits, as he saw her?¹

In rejecting these two pictures as the work of Holbein, I do not at all suggest that the rejection or acceptance of them has any final bearing on the question of whether Holbein had visited Italy or no. Karel Van Mander and the old writers following him expressly state that he had not. But the evidence of these writers is so often found to be untrustworthy where we have the means of testing their positive statements, that no great weight

¹ Since the above opinions were written I have accidentally found in the Accademia collection at Venice two sheets of drawings of the hands and arms of a woman by Cesare da Sesto which, allowing for the fact that the arms in the pictures are partly concealed by sleeves, bear quite a striking resemblance to the style and position of those in the two disputed pictures. The arms in one instance, though not precisely identical, are so similar that it needs comparison to show where they differ. The discovery has confirmed me in the opinion that, in spite of the difficulty of the date, Cesare da Sesto was probably the painter of the two pictures.

can be attached to their merely negative assertions. Milan could be easily reached from Basel by the St. Gothard pass or by Chur—the description of the routes by Benvenuto Cellini and by Erasmus reminds us of the fact even if we did not know that the path had been trodden by the feet of scores of Northern artists who made the journey to Italy. The fame of Leonardo and the Milanese school had at the time of Holbein's sojourn in Basel spread far and wide over Europe. The "Cenacolo" had been finished in 1498 and had already become an object of pilgrimage to painters. In the very first year of the young Holbein's stay in Basel, Leonardo must have passed through Switzerland, and probably the city, on his journey southwards to Milan, and a year later he must have visited it again on his last journey northwards to France. It is not only possible but surely more than probable that the inspiration of that presence, and the desire to see the works with whose fame the world of art was ringing, should have tempted the artist and his brother in their youth and strength to make the summer journey over the Alps. That probability we may not only concede, but cordially accept, though we cannot ask nor give assurance on such a point. But for evidence of such a visit, so far as any visible and lasting Italian influences are to be traced in the work of this essentially Northern painter of themes which are common both to North and South, we look without result. Some figtree here and there with its foliage cast boldly against a blue sky has encouraged some writers to see Italian influences in Holbein's work. It is arguing much from little. It did not need a visit to Italy to show Holbein a figtree thrown against a clear sky. It did not need the example of an Italian painter to show him of all men its decorative value when so seen.

There is, however, one instance of Leonardo's influence over the young painter, or rather, since the picture in question probably includes the handiwork of Ambros, let us say painters, which may not be so summarily dismissed. In the Basel Gallery is a large panel representing the Last Supper. I give its catalogue number of that gallery, No. 11 (x), to distinguish it from the same subject in the series of five very early Passion pictures on canvas discussed in an earlier chapter.

This picture has suffered much from several changes in its shape and its surface. It was once in two parts, as the Amerbach inventory informs us, and had been then joined together to form one picture. The joining was badly done, and at a later period the picture was again taken to pieces and once more reunited. Furthermore, the picture, which now only contains the figures of nine apostles, had once been larger, the two ends having been cut off. These facts are worth stating, as they will at once inform the reader what amount of serious change is likely to have occurred to the surface of the picture at the hands of its manipulators. As a matter of fact, the picture has been largely repainted, and with the somewhat palpable, though

doubtless conscientious, intention of making it conform to the Lombard style, in whose spirit it appeared to be conceived. But there is enough to tell us that the central figure has an unquestionable affinity to the central figure of Leonardo's "Cenacolo." The Basel picture belongs to the early years of Holbein's work in that city, and it bears evidence of having sprung from the joint studio of himself and of Ambros. It can claim no high rank amongst the works in which Holbein had a share. It is neither Holbein nor Leonardo; but, as such work is wont to do, it fails to impress us as a really original conception, even had it been a weak one, from either hand would have done. The Saviour's face is weak and unsatisfying, and wholly without that deeply impressive character which even the wreck of Leonardo's great work still bears. The overpainting of the picture almost throughout makes it difficult to assert through the evidence of technique which parts may be assigned to Ambros. But I should unquestionably assign to him the slightly caricatured figure of Judas on the left.

Still the picture, however unsatisfactory on these various grounds, does give evidence that the young painter had, either from having actually seen Leonardo's picture, or from having seen copies of it—for there is little difficulty in supposing that among the German artists who returned home through Basel after seeing the great picture some would have brought back records of it—had carried a very clear impression in his mind, which he reproduced in the conception of the Saviour. The fact fails definitely to prove a visit to Italy on the part of Holbein, though it suggests the probability, but it does not fail to prove that Holbein on this rare occasion painted in the style of the great Milanese master.

Yet another great Italian master remains to be mentioned—Andrea Mantegna, from whom it is generally assumed that influence had passed to Holbein. And this assumption is probably sound, though it would be very difficult indeed to point to any work from the hand of Holbein in which that influence was directly visible. It would be hard to select any single figure in the work of Holbein which betrays anything of the sculptural classicality which is the keynote of Mantegna's style. On the contrary, Holbein's figures, even in the lost wall paintings, so far as we are able to judge, were at all times conceived and executed with a distinct aiming at robust realism. Take for example the Peasant Frieze from the Haus zum Tanz, or the "Meeting of Saul and Samuel," or the "Elders before Rehoboam." We cannot point to a figure in one of these of which we could say that it is as Mantegna would have made it. Yet in that same subject of Samuel and Saul, and again in the superb drawing at Windsor of the "Queen of Sheba before Solomon," and perhaps most of all in the great processional design, the "Triumph of Riches" (so far as we can judge of it merely by the sketch and the engraving, which alone remain), we are strongly reminded of

Mantegna's manner of composition. No doubt the fact that both men are enamoured of Renaissance architecture, ornament, and detail makes the similarity of aim and nature seem stronger than it would, but there can be few who will be able to look at the "Triumph of Riches" without being carried back to the "Triumph of Julius Caesar." Here again, however, it is not necessary to insist on a journey to Italy. Mantegna had died in 1506, and a journey to Milan alone would not have shown Holbein that master's great works in colour. But Mantegna's engravings were widely known among artists, and the engraving of the "Triumph of Julius Caesar" was not so scarce in those days as it has now become. One may quite safely assume that they were known to and admired by Holbein, and one may be also quite ready to believe that they inspired him to see and to design his own great compositions with the same largeness of feeling and the same dignified sense of movement and rhythmical balance.

The evidence, therefore, of a visit to Italy is little advanced by our being able to see and acknowledge in Holbein's works a point or two of contact with the great Italians, since that contact can be accounted for without assuming any such visit. And on the whole, when we have searched the known work of Holbein through and through, and delved in it for Italian influences, even to the parading of the foliage of a figtree as one of the spoils of our quest, we shall surely be impressed with the poverty of the result. Even if we admit the "Lais" and the "Venus," and add to them the "Last Supper" of Basel, a work of his immature period, we have but three pictures in which Holbein has evidently experimented in a style which was not his own. And those experiments, it should be remarked, would establish nothing that can be called an Italian influence which has incorporated itself in the artist's style so that it runs through it all and tinges it in all its manifestations. On the contrary, you may, as it were, detach these pictures from the man's work, and no further sign of an influence can be sworn to in any undoubted work of Holbein which we know of. It was not so with the other great German, Albrecht Dürer. The Italian influence which showed itself in his works after his first journey to Italy never passed away again from his work. He was less absolutely and uncompromisingly German after it than he had been before. He shows not the curious wish to try his hand in a new style, but an influence visibly absorbed into his own nature. Influence, in the true sense, does not act intermittently and in patches. Experimental imitation of course does. And the question has been worth raising, since when we fairly examine Holbein's work to discover the evidence on which the statement so often repeated really rests, we shall find once more that Holbein, if ever he came fully within the range of those influences, so completely absorbed them into his own personality that he remained absolutely himself in spite of them.

CHAPTER XI

PORTRAITS OF ERASMUS

WHEN the boy Holbein arrived in Basel and carried his first drawing for the engraver to Hans Froben the printer, he had touched the first link of a chain which was not to be broken until the day when the painter should be laid in his unknown grave in London. For through Froben Holbein was brought into touch with Erasmus. Through Erasmus he had his first introduction to Sir Thomas More, and from that beginning followed the great English series, the king and his queens, the statesmen and the courtiers, the poets and the men of letters, the divines and the scholars, the ambassadors and the merchants, the grooms, the maids, and the huntsmen, whose portraits while we look at them seem to people for us that wonderful period with real living beings.

Erasmus, as we have already recorded, had arrived in Basel in the same year, 1514, in which the two brothers had left their Augsburg home. He had gone there partly through disgust at the condition of religious feeling in Louvain, where he had been living, partly attracted by the fame of the Basel press, and partly, no doubt, by the restlessness which was part of the nervous activity of the man. He had books on hand which he was anxious to see through the press—his "Adages," his New Testament, amongst the chief. His name was already familiar throughout Northern Europe to all those—and they were very many—who saw in the New Learning one great hope for the growing enlightenment of the world. To Froben the arrival of Erasmus at Basel must have seemed like the coming of Orpheus. A pretty story is told, true or not matters little, that Erasmus at his first interview with Froben passed himself off as a messenger sent by Erasmus himself to negotiate, but that presently the eagerness of the man got the better of his powers of acting a part, which were never very high, though he was often at pains to improve them, and betrayed him into showing too intimate a knowledge for anyone but the author to possess. Froben, the story goes on, embraced his visitor with tears of gratitude, and sending for his baggage from the inn, compelled him to be guest at his own house, "Zum Luft" in the Fishmarket,¹ which lay scarcely two minutes' walk from the Rathaus Square and from the house of Jakob Meier zum Hasen. Erasmus had in the first

¹ Froben afterwards moved to a house, No. 18 in the Baumleingasse, which descends from the neighbourhood of the Cathedral plateau to the Freiestrasse. Here Erasmus died in 1536.

instance no intention of making Basel his abiding place. He was away from it by the end of 1515, and, save for a short visit in 1519, did not return to it until, in the year 1521, he took up his quarters once more with Froben, and became what we must call, for want of a better expression, literary director to the great printing-house. The death of Froben from an accident in 1527 ended a friendship which brings out both men at their best.¹ Erasmus, ever in want of money and sometimes peevishly querulous in his demands upon his friends for it, yet speaks always forbearingly of Froben's dealing with him during his lifetime, and showed unmistakable sorrow at his death. Froben, he says in one of his letters, had made but little out of his work in spite of the thousands of copies that had been sold, and had really paid him as much as he could. And his testimony to Froben's qualities of kindness and helpfulness, in a letter written to the Carthusian prior, John Emstedt, comes, one feels as one reads it, genuinely from the heart. Erasmus remained in Basel after the good printer's death, and left it only after the iconoclastic outbreak, not merely because that incident had shown him that Basel was no longer a place to be at peace in, but also because, as he says in one of his letters, his staying there might seem to argue his approval of what had been done. The description of what took place which he wrote to his friend Wilibald Pirckheimer—the friend also of Dürer, whose engraved portrait of him will at once occur to the reader—has so much bearing upon the possible fate of some of Holbein's pictures that it is worth quoting at length.

"Smiths and carpenters were sent to remove the images from the churches. The roods and the unfortunate saints were cruelly handled. Strange that none of them worked a miracle to avenge their dignity when before they had worked so many at the slightest invitation. Not a statue was left in church niche or monastery. The paintings on the walls were whitewashed. Everything combustible was burnt. What would not burn was broken to pieces. Nothing was spared, however precious or beautiful; and mass was prohibited even in private houses."

We do not gather from anything which Erasmus writes that he had any special affection for Art beyond the sympathy which he felt for it as inseparable from that higher learning which he so ardently believed in as the agency which was to help to bring reform to Europe. His visit to Rome dwelt long in his memory, and he often sighed for the days which were never to be repeated in that atmosphere of art and culture. But it was rather because art went hand in hand with letters and with every other form of culture that he admired it and would have protected it, than because his heart was with it. He loved and probably understood music far better, and was himself a skilled musician. I do not find that either in his letters or in

¹ The portrait of Froben at Hampton Court is discussed in an earlier page. Of this picture another version, now acknowledged to be a copy, hangs at Basel.



Erasmus, 1523
The Louvre

his "Colloquies" (but I may be mistaken) he mentions any work of art—and yet he must have seen masterpieces by Leonardo and Michelangelo, by Perugino and Raphael, in their first glory—as if it had so entered into his soul that he desired to see it again. Neither do artists seem to have deeply interested him as such, though for the character of Albrecht Dürer he had the warmest admiration. He mentions Holbein occasionally in his letters, and always with kindness, but without any indication that there was any close intimacy between them, or that he felt any ardent admiration for the art of the young painter whose career he was destined to direct into its final channel. His interests were, indeed, more with letters than with art, and probably even the woodcuts with which Holbein and others adorned his pages were merely regarded by him as the inevitable completion of the printed page, and interesting so far as they expressed again in the engraving what had already been said in the text. On the other hand, though the letter is not preserved, it is evident that when Erasmus wrote to More about the young artist he must have employed more glowing terms than usual, since More replies to him, "your painter must be a wonderful man," and this expression reads more as if it were evoked by something which Erasmus had written than by More's knowledge of the portraits of Erasmus which had reached England a year or two before.¹ It is strange, by the way, that More does not seem to have known—at any rate he makes no allusion to the fact—that Holbein was the artist who had some eight years before illustrated, in conjunction with Ambros, the third edition of "Utopia," which Froben printed at Basel. This negative evidence, if it may be so called, seems to point to the fact that it was not by Erasmus' influence that Holbein was chosen to illustrate the "Utopia," but that it came about in the ordinary way of business through Froben as a part of his duties as a publisher.

One can well understand the fascination which the personality of Erasmus would exercise over such a man as Holbein. Erasmus' first visit to Basel in 1514-15 had not been a long one, and he had lived in Froben's house as a guest and not as a member of the firm. Holbein, too, was a newcomer to the city and a mere boy. There was little opportunity or likelihood of close relationship between the two men, though, as we have already seen, the marginal pen drawings in the "Praise of Folly" fall within that period. When Erasmus next paid a visit to Basel Holbein was probably absent in Lucerne. And it was not till 1522, when Erasmus had settled in the house of Froben as director of his publications, and when Holbein was now a fully recognized master, that the two men can have met on terms of nearer equality. Holbein's business dealings with Froben must have taken him continually into the little study or cabinet where Erasmus sat over his

¹ See Froude, "Life and Letters of Erasmus," Lecture XVIII.

proofs and his manuscripts. By that date Erasmus had become one of the best known figures in Europe. He had outlived the days of poverty and dependence, he had not yet outlived the bright spirits and the quick sympathy with all manner of men which had helped him through those days. His New Testament which Froben had printed had come upon Europe almost as a revelation, and had been read far and wide by men who perhaps would never have troubled to look into it if they had not previously been charmed by the wit and the insight and the knowledge of men and manners that they had found in the "Praise of Folly," the "Adagia," and the "Colloquies." In these days we who look back upon the men who lived in that great century of change may find it hard to understand how Erasmus could have ever been reckoned a greater force than Luther. But we are apt to forget that the many-sidedness of the man, the wide range of his human sympathies, his penetrating humour, which is indeed human sympathy in one of its most concentrated shapes, carried him into the hearts of men who were not to be reached by the single-line earnestness of the other. "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it,"¹ was the often-quoted saying of that day, and it expresses far more than half a truth. The attitude of the two men towards the great question was wholly unlike. Erasmus stood to all the world as the champion of the New Learning. He believed that he saw in that the force which was to scatter ignorance and darkness from men's minds, and should make the degradation and superstition which lurked in its shadows impossible alike for monk and man. And to that ideal of his he was as loyal and true as Luther to his. This adherence to an ideal is surely the quality of the man which runs throughout his life like a golden thread, and redeems it from the faults, or rather outweighs all the faults, which not only his enemies, but also his friends, can lay their hands on as they read him in his own confessions. Never was mortal more chameleon-like, taking this colour and that as we turn over his pages and view him under this light or the other. Sometimes, in the days of the needy scholar, as we read a begging letter, we find our pity coming dangerously near to contempt, and then we turn the page to find the same man, to whom money meant so much, since his ill-health made all hardship doubly hard, refusing all fees for his lectures from poor scholars at Cambridge. We find him time after time proclaiming himself—for he was no hypocrite, and the worst and the best about himself come tumbling out together in his pages—as having no taste for any form of martyrdom and discomfort, and yet perpetually taking risks for himself, and boldly taking up the cudgels for the honesty of the unpopular Luther, for whose methods he had no taste and with whose views he was not in

¹ Erasmus' witty rejoinder is well known: "Yes, but the egg which I laid was a hen's egg, and Luther has hatched a game cock."

STUDY FOR THE HANDS OF ERASMUS

LOUVRE



sympathy. As we read his cynical advice to some correspondent on the way to behave himself if he would succeed in England or in Rome, and to another on the bearing of a courtier, we are inclined to write him down worldling, and to class him some degrees below Polonius, whose morals read far higher; and then we are reminded that he, to whom learned leisure would have meant so much, had refused to be won over by Pope after Pope, from Julius to Paul, setting aside at last the cardinal's hat and the lordly income that he might still live in the smell of the printer's ink, and follow his beloved learning whithersoever it might lead him. There must have been in this strange man and in his personality a charm which could be known only to those who had met him—a charm which proved itself equally in the presence of a Julius II. or a Leo X., a Henry VIII. or a Thomas Cromwell, of a More and a Fisher, a Colet and a Grocyn, a Froben or an Amerbach. He was equally at home with all of these, but nowhere more at home, perhaps, than in that little room of Froben's printing-house where Holbein saw him, and watched him as he wrote, and gave him to us—the actual man himself.

We know that two portraits of Erasmus by Holbein had already reached England before the painter came hither himself. These two portraits can be identified almost beyond dispute in the picture which is now at Longford Castle, and which bears the date 1523, and the other which now hangs in the Louvre, having once, as the marks on the back declare, formed part of the collection of Charles I. It is uncertain to whom these portraits were originally sent. The Louvre portrait, which as a work of art is one of the finest of all of Holbein's portraits, represents Erasmus in profile, and corresponds very closely with the portrait at Basel, which latter was probably the same which Holbein carried to Amerbach, who was then living at Avignon, in 1524. The Longford Castle portrait gives a three-quarters face view, and Erasmus is looking up while he holds an edition of his own works in his hand. A later version seems to have been painted by Holbein in 1530, when Holbein was on his way back from England and found Erasmus living at Freiburg im Breisgau. This portrait, which is a small medallion, and which shows the face very much aged by the wear and tear of the last few years of his life before leaving Basel, is the prototype of many editions which are scattered about Europe. Indeed, the portraits of Erasmus, of which very few indeed came actually from the hand of Holbein, form quite a population, and are an eloquent proof of the popularity both of the subject and the painter.

As we look at the two portraits from Longford Castle and from the Louvre,¹ we feel that the gift of insight into character, in which no portrait

¹ The picture at Basel may be taken to be the original study, since it is painted on paper subsequently laid down upon a panel.

painter who ever lived has surpassed Holbein, is shown here in its highest perfection. Other men have been able to set down the outward appearance of a man with as much veracity—Frans Hals, for example, could seize the look of the moment with a certainty as convincing—but for subtle and penetrating insight below the surface of a man, for the infallible power of perceiving in the face the character which has been built up in it by the perpetual small additions which a man's method of thought and action, his manner of life, his temperament, are always making upon the lines of the face—in short, all that is meant by that which has now become almost a cant phrase and yet remains a good one, "the painting of the soul"—no man seems to me to have had better equipment than Hans Holbein. And while he seems to give you all that is in a man in a form so convincing that you actually seem to be with the man as surely as if you were sitting face to face with him, yet it seems to have come so naturally and so inevitably that you are at first merely conscious that the man is there; it needs some effort on your own part to make you try to realize or trouble yourself about the details of the art which put him there. Holbein does not, as some great portrait painters have done, first of all create for himself a vision of the man's character, his soul, and then paint up to that. He rather goes straight to a face, asks it to tell him what its lines mean, what history is written there of the soul inside it, of the life behind it, sets it all down with simple yet subtle veracity, adds nothing, leaves out nothing, exaggerates nothing, never falsifies a note nor slurs a passage, and yet like some great musician brings out living music for us, where another, no less accurate and no less careful, gives us but a painstaking musical exercise that neither touches nor delights us. As you look at Holbein's "Erasmus," his "More," his "Henry VIII.," you know that he has given us not only what the men looked like, but what they were. We cannot set the portraits of the sitters beside the living men either in his or in any other artist's case, but it has happened to Holbein in a degree in which it has happened to no other, to paint the men who were destined to make the history of their own day. It is strange how these men and women whom Holbein has given us lock themselves up in our imagination with their lives, their characters, their fates, so that one can never think of them apart again. They do more than interest us, these portraits of Holbein, they do more than delight us, they do more than satisfy us of their veracity, they live for us. One can say no less and no more.

Two woodcut portraits of Erasmus exist from drawings by Holbein, of which the smaller, a medallion portrait, seems to give us the man at about the same time of his life as the Longford Castle and Louvre portraits, and is so fine and directly simple in its technique that its cutting is generally attributed to the knife of Hans Lützelburger, who, dying in 1526, might



Erasmus of Rotterdam
Paul. Musum

have accomplished this work. Another woodcut¹ represents Erasmus at full length in a kind of niche, within a richly ornamented canopy, with Renaissance terminal figures and scrolls, and formed the frontispiece of the 1540 edition of his works. But the woodcut was undoubtedly cut before Erasmus' death in 1536, and early impressions, very beautiful, exist of this woodcut which differ from the later frontispiece in having but one Latin couplet instead of two. The drawing and the cutting of this portrait are alike masterly, and though one is little apt to take notice of the high-flown language of distich or of epitaph, for once one is inclined to accept the claim which the inscription makes—perhaps Erasmus himself wrote it—"If any has not looked upon the living form of Erasmus, this picture, drawn to the life, will give it him." It would be impossible to convey more in the few bold, simple lines which woodcut in that day allowed itself, than here is given us. We seem to see the man, weak in body, frail of health, alert in mind, and brave in spirit—far braver than he made himself out, whose pugnacity is not yet extinguished as he lays his hand upon his *Terminus*, his fixed purpose, symbolical in Holbein's mind of the unyielding temper of the man, since the interpretation is given us by the artist himself in another design at Basel, where over a figure of *Terminus* is written the motto, "*Concedo Nulli*."

I have found yet another incidental portrait of Erasmus which, so far as I know, has not been noticed hitherto. In the Passion series of designs for stained glass at Basel (see Chapter VIII.), in the crucifixion scene, one of the spectators, who looks down upon the cross, is dressed in a biretta cap, long cloak, and a fur tippet. He is intended, I believe, for Joseph of Arimathaea. But the reader who examines the drawing, even through its reproduction, will, if he has become familiar with the features of Erasmus, find them once more in that figure. If so, I make no doubt that he was placed there by his own consent. It is tempting to try to conjecture, but it hardly belongs to this page to do it, what exact meaning Holbein and Erasmus between them had for placing him there in that character.

The Louvre portrait, which, as I have said, is one of the finest in quality of all the finished portraits of Erasmus, is of small size, not above sixteen inches high. Its superb surface has suffered little in the most important parts, but the background has lost something by restoration, and in parts the colour has probably darkened under old varnish now removed. Yet, granting this, the work in its most essential details survives as a fine instance of the best handwork of Holbein, and may be safely used as a standard example. Erasmus wears the dark cap and the fur-lined coat in which he is always represented. The complexion is warm and even healthy. One gray lock straggles from under the cap. The eyebrow, which repro-

¹ See British Museum and Munich Print Rooms.

duction cannot avoid darkening to a heavy black, is light-brown, with no tinge of gray as yet in it. The expression of the face is very set and quiet, with something which reminds one of Voltaire about the lips and mouth. He is painted in a mood, probably habitual to him, of set concentration, absorbed entirely in the letter which he is writing. One can see how easily the face would light up instantaneously in response to a touch of humour. Turn, indeed, to the portrait from Longford Castle, and you will see the change effected. The face in that portrait is less concentrated and more winning. There is a kindly smile lurking about the mouth. It is the Erasmus of the genial symposia in the company of Warham and Colet and More, the Erasmus of the letters and the "Colloquies," as much as the Louvre portrait is the Erasmus of the New Testament and the "Encomium Moriae." And Holbein knew him and understood him in both moods.

When Holbein, now the father of two children, at last found that Basel was no longer a place in which to do more than barely keep his head above water, he turned his eyes naturally enough towards that England of which he had heard so much from Erasmus. There is a story, which rests on no sure foundation, that the Earl of Arundel had, while passing through Basel, sat to Holbein and had persuaded him to try his fortune in London. If this story were true, it would seem strange that the Earl of Arundel disappears thenceforth from the history of Holbein. At least one feels certain that, even if it were true, Holbein would not have failed to take counsel on the matter from Erasmus. Erasmus, as we know, wrote to More, and the reply of the latter from Greenwich in December, 1524,¹ has already been quoted. He tells Erasmus that, though he can see that his painter is a wonderful artist, yet he fears that he will not find England so fruitful as he hopes; but he will do his part to help him to make it so. The journey was not immediately undertaken. Perhaps the answer discouraged Holbein, who must already have known from Erasmus that he was not to expect a gold mine. Or perhaps he had the "Meier Madonna" to detain him in Basel. But things were getting worse and worse for artists in that city, and at length, in 1526, Holbein set forth upon his eventful journey armed with a letter of introduction from Erasmus to Petrus Aegidius,² then living at Antwerp. The brief letter, in Latin as usual, asks Aegidius to introduce the young painter to Quintinus, that is, Quentin Matsys, and adds the recommendation that Holbein may be safely trusted with letters if he have any to consign through him. And so for the present Holbein passes out of sight of Erasmus.

¹ The letter bears date Greenwich, 1525. It has been shown that the Court was not at Greenwich in December, 1525, but in December, 1524, and an accidental misdating of the letter seems to have occurred.

² A fine portrait of Aegidius by Quentin Matsys hangs near the Erasmus at Longford Castle.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST ENGLISH PERIOD

1526-1528

WE have no particulars of Holbein's journey to England, how long he remained in Antwerp, by what route he crossed the sea, nor at what exact time he arrived in London. One may take it almost for granted that a man of his sympathies, the fountain of whose art had already flowed down to him by Flemish channels, would not fail to use his opportunity for visiting the great Flemish primitives, the Van Eycks, Memlinc, Van der Weyden, Gerard David in their own homes. Ghent and Bruges lay at no great distance seaward, and whether he took ship at Flushing, or chose the longer land route and the shorter sea passage by Calais—an expensive method for one whose pockets were as empty as Holbein's—he would, one feels sure, have made the pilgrimage to those two cities. But we are dealing here with mere probabilities, and we do not find ourselves on secure ground until we are able to show Holbein at work on the portraits of Sir Thomas More and his family. Indeed, throughout the whole career of this painter, as of so many others who lived north of the Alps, we have to contend with a singular paucity of established facts. If we are ready to promote possibilities into probabilities, and then to treat the probabilities as ascertained facts, we can doubtless reconstruct the life of the man. But in the present condition of the evidence, and it is hardly likely that much more of a trustworthy nature will be added to it, we have to content ourselves with references drawn mainly from the dates of his pictures, with here and there a stiffening of recorded fact.

Karel Van Mander, writing some sixty years after the death of the painter, tells us that on Holbein's arrival in England he at once became the guest of Sir Thomas More, and the statement, which may or may not be accurate—for Karel Van Mander was very often at fault—has been enlarged by some biographers till we read that Holbein lived under More's roof for three whole years. It is very possible that, on Holbein's first arrival in London, More may have entertained him in his house at Chelsea. It is very unlikely that the young painter would have remained there permanently. The position would have been an embarrassment to both parties. Holbein at that time probably spoke no English, and though we have given him

credit for Latinity enough to enable him to enter into the spirit of the "Praise of Folly" and the "Utopia" when he illustrated their pages, yet it can hardly be supposed that he had Latin enough to use it colloquially. Erasmus had found no difficulty in at once joining the little band of friends of which More, Warham and Colet, Grocyn and Linacre were the chief figures, since both he and they were able to use Latin as freely as men now use French. But it can hardly be supposed that Holbein possessed any facility of the kind. Moreover, it is hard to believe that Holbein could for long have practised his art at his ease under the cramping conditions which that hospitality would have imposed upon him. The fact that most of Holbein's sitters during this first English visit belonged to the immediate circle of More's friends does not require us to believe that Holbein had his studio under More's roof. Naturally the introductions given to Holbein by Erasmus and by More would be to the common friends of both men in the first instance. It is most probable that Holbein, soon after his first introduction to England, would have sought an independent painting-room in his own lodging.

It is however certain that More carried out the promise which he had given to Erasmus of doing his best for Holbein in the most practical manner, by allowing the painter to commence that series of portraits of the More family which opened the way for further commissions. But before we examine the works themselves it is necessary to say a few words about the household of Sir Thomas More, with which Holbein was thus brought into connection.

The letter which Erasmus wrote to Ulrich von Hutten, describing the home of the More family, gives to us a charming picture of the best type of English life in Tudor days. It is so well known that it seems almost superfluous to quote it, and yet no description of Sir Thomas More would seem quite complete without it. "More," he writes, "has built near London, upon the Thames,"—it was at Chelsea, and seems to have lain among gardens and fields at the river end of what is now Beaufort Street—"a modest but commodious house. There he lives surrounded by his large family—his wife, his son, his son's wife, his three daughters and their husbands, with eleven grandchildren. There is not any man living so affectionate to his children as he, and he loveth his old wife as if she were a girl of fifteen. Such is the goodness of his nature that whatsoever cometh about which cannot be helped he is as cheerful and well satisfied as if the best had happened. In More's house you would say that the Academy of Plato lived again, save that whereas in the academy the conversation turned upon geometry and the power of numbers, the house at Chelsea is a true school of Christian religion. In it is no one, man or woman, but studieth the liberal arts, yet above all piety is their care. There is never any seen



SCHEME OF THE LOST PICTURE OF THE MORE FAMILY

BASEL.

idle; the head of the house governs it not by lofty demeanour and frequent rebukes, but by gentle and lovable manners. Everyone is busy in his place, doing his business with diligence; nor is sober mirth absent." There is much more in this and in other letters which show us the man and his conversation, his bright and happy ways among children, his fondness for pets, his kindly ways among his servants. It is a picture of simple living and high thinking, drawn by one who knew him in his own home, and adding to it Holbein's portrait and More's own writing, and, above all, the record of the man's own life as it comes to us out of that sad yet splendid page of English history, we seem to know him as we are not privileged to know many of those who bore their part in the great drama.

More had been early marked for great things. When he was still "a beardless youth," soon after his election to Parliament, he had dared to face Henry VII. and his agent Dudley and to oppose the imposition of a benevolence on the occasion of the Princess Margaret's marriage. The king took his revenge, not on young More, but on his father, Judge More, the hearty frosty-faced, gray-eyed old man of the Windsor portrait series. An imprisonment upon another pretext was the judge's lot, which he presently escaped by payment of a heavy fine. At a later date young More, as Speaker of the House, was again found equal to opposing Wolsey in his projects for raising money, having indeed quite evidently something in him of the stuff of which Hampden and Pym were made in a later age. There was no love lost between More and Wolsey, who, by the way, is also said to have disliked Erasmus. More at that time could have little foreseen that he was destined to witness the fall of the great cardinal, to succeed him as Chancellor, and himself to fall through an issue arising out of the very same cause—the divorce of Katharine—which had brought Wolsey to his ruin. When More first sat to Holbein for his portrait in 1527 he was not yet Chancellor; but soon after Wolsey was disgraced, in 1529, he succeeded to the office. More could have made little mistake as to the reasons which prompted Henry to promote him to honour. He must have known his danger well, since he knew both himself and Henry well. The king might drop in upon him in his house at Chelsea, as a man drops in upon his friend, and stay to dinner; he might walk in More's garden with his arm affectionately about the Chancellor's neck, but More knew better than anyone else that the head which was enfolded so lovingly by the king's arm would fall if ever Henry had aught to gain by it. Henry never could really have liked More. So far back as the day when the "Utopia" was published, More in its pages had read a lecture to kings, and, by inference, to Henry among them. Henry had seemed to approve, or, at any rate, to forgive and to forget. I doubt if he ever forgot any wound, even the slightest, to self. However little he might seem to be aware of what was passing, no monarch

who ever sat on a throne was keener to notice and more tenacious to remember any act of, or any bearing in any man which seemed to savour of a wish to dictate to or to rule him, to handle him, or to model or to shape him to any purpose but his own. No man could less brook a rival or an equal. And to lecture him implied superiority. Henry knew, too, that More had not feared to thwart his father's minister once, and his own minister more than once; he would do so again at any moment. But Henry knew his worth as an ally and his value also as an opponent. The character and opinion of such a man was, if he could be won over, in itself a valuable asset. More was not in the ordinary sense a popular man, since he had never cultivated the arts which make men popular. He cared nothing for the Court and its ways. Strenuous and effective in his public life, he lived his own private life in his own way, amidst his books and his children and the little circle of staunch friends of tastes that matched his own. Yet no man's good word was better worth having, and no man's support to a cause was better worth earning. If Henry could make sure of winning More's support to the divorce he removed from his path one whose opposition could not be weighed by setting against it in the balance the compliance of half a hundred courtiers. And the favours which Henry heaped upon him were, and More knew it, merely an experiment on the part of one who had not yet learned to the full the lesson in more direct methods which Cromwell was presently to school him to. But More was neither to be bought nor bent, and when, after less than three years of office, the experiment had failed, and More, whose attitude towards the divorce remained unchanged, had felt himself compelled to resign the Chancellorship, he must have forecast the future possibilities of fate clearly enough to himself. We need not follow him to the scaffold. His refusal to sign the double clause of the oath which declared Henry to be the supreme head of the Church and the marriage with Katharine illegitimate, involves questions which cannot rightly be discussed here. But that More had kept faith with his own conscience and had preserved to the end the character of a high-minded, fearless and chivalrous English gentleman no one, of whatsoever faith or politics he be, will be found to deny.

When Holbein painted the author of "Utopia," which, as we have said, Holbein had illustrated years before, More was about fifty-one years old. There are two drawings at Windsor, one of which seems to be some years later than the other. The first of the two, which may be considered the original study for the oil portrait in the possession of Mr. Huth, convinces one at the first glance of its lifelike fidelity. The clear gray eye, showing, as Erasmus remarked, that very small pupil "which in England is accounted to be one of the signs of genius;" the finely-curved brow arch, from under which the glance comes as penetrating and dauntless as of some eagle; the



Sir Thomas More
Collection of Edward Roth & Co.

firm fine line of the mouth, grave set by habit, and yet ready to break into a smile; all this goes together to give us the face of the man in whom and in whose life strength and tenderness, humour and pathos, laughter and tears, lay close together. The light brown hair straggling from beneath the cap, the complexion sallow and almost pallid, agree with what Erasmus tells us. Holbein tells us further, by the redness round the eyes, that the man he was drawing was a student.

There are many instances in which, as we look from Holbein's preliminary studies in chalk to his finished oil picture, we find ourselves as fully satisfied with the former as the latter. And this is not always due, though it often is, to the fact that the oil painting has entirely escaped the hand of the restorer, but rather to the fact that Holbein in these studies gives us absolutely all that Art can give or ask. That he gives it sometimes in the form of a suggestion, leaving the imagination to take it on from the point to which he has led us, makes it not less but more delightful. We share, as it were, the vision of the painter because he takes us into his confidence, and treats us as if we must know and sympathize with all that he saw and felt. And his seeing and feeling embraced all that was in the man. He sees through the face of a man as if he were looking through a glass window that opened to the soul. As you turn over the Windsor drawings¹ you seem to sit beside and look into the same face as he looked into. But you would not perhaps have seen all that he saw in them. He is to you what the great artist must ever be, the interpreter, the artist as "seer," as Carlyle would have told us if he had admitted painters to his hierarchy at all. And yet he does it so simply and so inevitably that you are convinced that he is setting down exactly what he saw. It is the power of his seeing that seems to awake in you some corresponding power.

The earlier of the two portraits is pricked along the leading lines for transfer to a panel by the familiar means of pouncing, that is, of dusting coloured chalk through the pin pricks, the result, since the dusting must in delicate works take place from behind, being a reversed portrait. This pricking is of no small interest, because it shows us what lines Holbein considered absolutely indispensable to his portrait. They are briefly as follows: The outline of forehead and cheek against the background, the line of the division of the lips (not the thickness of the lips), the nose, nostril and curve of the depression between lip and nostril, the angle of the eyebrow, and exact line of the upper and lower eyelids. Also the wrinkles

¹ These priceless possessions are in the Royal Library at Windsor. Most of them have been exhibited to the public more than once in the last thirty years—for example, at the Winter Exhibition of Old Masters at Burlington House in 1880, and at the Tudor Exhibition, 1890, and on other occasions.

under the left eye. The drawing, though of the broadest and simplest, is yet full of subtle observation. One needs to examine it somewhat exactly in order to see how Holbein has observed and set down with unerring decision, and yet with the loveliest tenderness of line, those very minute curves and changes in the direction of a line which help to make the difference of characteristic in this face or in that, and which added all together make each human face individual and standing apart, in spite of apparent likeness, from all other human faces. That is how he handles the leading lines of the face. The modelling within these lines is produced in the broadest manner, sometimes by washes of tint so subtly modulated as to tell everything to the eye, and yet to seem to the careless glance almost like an uniform tint. No reproduction, however excellent, can fairly be asked to deal fitly with this modelling, since a comparatively uniform and always over-black surface results. Where Holbein has rubbed, apparently with his finger and thumb, black or coloured chalk upon the surface to produce the modelling of the face, the reproduction has a better chance. But no one can thoroughly understand the extraordinary beauty of these preliminary studies—there are over eighty at Windsor alone—who has not lovingly examined the originals.

Holbein's method with regard to portrait seems to have been established from the outset, and to have varied very little. He made a clear and decisive sketch in chalk of considerable size on white paper. This paper, during his English period at any rate, was a tough-looking material showing the horizontal wire marks. Holbein appears to have soaked this beforehand in body colour, often of a pinkish tint, and I am inclined to think that he sometimes subjected it before using it to strong pressure, since the wire marks are often flattened out in the middle of the paper, but are more visible at the edges. In some cases, however, as in the "Lady Parker" and the "Sir Harry Guildford," the paper has been used without any preparation. The leading lines are drawn in red or black chalk,¹ more often the former, and every essential detail is inserted to the neglect of all unessentials, so that the drawing shall hereafter, with the aid of the artist's mind, act to him as a perfect record of all that made up the man. The details of dress are similarly reckoned with. The general or universal facts, such as the fall of a fold, the texture of a fur, the droop of a feather, are loosely and slightly indicated. They can be recovered or supplied at any moment. But the special facts which give the dress of the man or the woman its individuality, so to speak, are carefully noted. Thus a very small portion, just an inch or two, of the embroidery about a lady's throat, or the jewelled border of her coif, will be drawn with exquisite and accurate care; or the design of the pendant which droops to her breast will be carefully indicated, since

¹ Charcoal seems also to have been used.

SIR THOMAS MORE

WINDSOR CASTLE

Thos Moor L^t Chancelour



these were the things in which the woman, her tastes, her preferences showed themselves. They make, in secondary sort, a part of her, and are, therefore, worth recording as perfectly as may be. For colour he trusts to slight indications and suggestions, or even to pencil notes. Only in one or two instances, as, for example, in the drawing at Windsor of the younger Godsalve is the colour at all fully carried out.

And this brings one for a moment to the actual history of the drawings themselves, which is of interest both as regards the work of Holbein and the identity of many of the portraits. They appear to be the set of portraits which, according to R. N. Wornum in his notes to Horace Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting,"¹ are found recorded in a catalogue belonging to the Lumley family. It is therein stated that the "book" of sketches, for they seem at one time to have been collected in book form, and are again so described later when they were in the possession of the Earl of Arundel, had belonged to Edward VI. It is added that his tutor, Sir John Cheke, was responsible for the names which we now find printed on the drawings in large Roman letter of that period. Sir John Cheke had lived in the days when most of those who are represented in the drawings had been familiar figures at the Court, and it is strange, therefore, to find that in so many cases, and that, moreover, where the persons were of the highest interest, his naming has been disputed, and successfully disputed. We shall, however, have to return to some of these instances in a later page. The collection, it is said, was sold into France, and, having been purchased by M. de Liencourt, was by him presented to Charles I., who, becoming enamoured of Raphael's "St. George," which now hangs in the Louvre, exchanged the Holbein sketches for that picture, which then belonged to the Earl of Pembroke. They passed thence, one only remaining behind, the "Thomas Cromwell," to the Earl of Arundel. A very interesting note in R. N. Wornum's edition of Walpole's "Anecdotes" gives the words of the officer who had the keeping of the drawings, which he speaks of as still a "book." He says that through the ignorance and carelessness of someone who previously had the keeping of them, the drawings have suffered serious injury.

An examination of the drawings quite corroborates both the carelessness and the injury, but it is more than possible that both may, in a great measure, be due to Holbein himself, who probably regarded them as little more than useful memoranda, and by no means final works of art. They are badly rubbed, some of the finest and most delicate having lost much of their chalk, and in many cases they have been rudely folded across. In the case of the Warham and one or two others oil stains are also visible, all these signs when taken together seeming to show the wear and tear of

¹ "Anecdotes of Painting," by Horace Walpole, edited by R. N. Wornum, vol. I., p. 85 *et seq.*

studio practice. From the time when we hear of them in the Earl of Arundel's collection they are lost sight of until Queen Caroline discovered them in a cabinet at Kensington Palace. She caused them to be framed, and they remained in that condition until they were transferred to their present resting-place in the Royal Library at Windsor. They are now carefully mounted and kept in two portfolios, and it may be safely prophesied that these inestimable treasures will suffer no further injury.

A careful examination of these drawings, and of the detached examples which are to be found in the collections at Berlin, Dresden, and the British Museum, will, I am quite persuaded, result in the conclusion that the strengthening of the outlines, either by chalk lines or in many cases by Indian ink, is not due to the hand of Holbein himself. Among the drawings are a few which have never been so touched. The lines of these are of great delicacy and of the most expressive quality—an artistic dream which has almost faded from the paper. These are the select few which, having suffered most from rubbing, and having the faintest indications to guide the hand of the reinforcer, have been left in their ghostly beauty. Others have been revived by the application of a bolder chalk line of the proper colour in parts where the outline seemed most to need it. It has been done on the whole well, if such a thing can ever be said to have been well done at all. But these same lines will be found to be hard and wiry, and somewhat unfeeling as compared to the subtly sympathetic outline of the master himself. There remains yet the further manner of reinforcement by a strong outlining, often accompanied by a slight thickening in parts by means of a wash, in what appears to be Indian ink. The ink has toned now, and has lost much of the offence of its once strong contrast with the rest of the delicate modelling. But remembering what that contrast would have been when the ink was fresh, I find it impossible to believe that it was added by the hand of Holbein. If he himself had considered these things as works which were fit to represent his art by being preserved as examples, it is certain that he would not have allowed them to lie one against the other to their certain destruction, or if, desiring to redeem his own carelessness, he had set about repairing them to make them presentable, would he have employed so very trenchant a method as the setting of strong Indian ink against the delicately modulated surfaces of his chalk drawing? It was perfectly within his power at that time to have renewed their life by his own lines added in the original material. If, on the other hand, it is urged that he had no such intention, but merely added the Indian ink to preserve the outline for possible use again in his pictures, we have then to point out that the nature of that suggestion requires that this strengthening should have been added at a period considerably after the original execution of the chalk drawing, and we have to ask what likelihood there was at the

CICELY HERON

WINDSOR CASTLE



period of Holbein's life which we have to imagine to fit the circumstances, when he had become King's Limner, and when Fisher and More and many another were already dead of the king's displeasure, that he would be likely to want their sketches again for future use to paint from them. And if he had foreseen such an use for them, chalk would have served his purpose well enough.

I suggest that this strengthening by Indian ink took place when the drawings came into the hands of Charles I. By that time they were probably seriously rubbed, and very faint of outline. It was not an incapable hand that was employed upon the task. Far less has been lost than might have been if the work had fallen into quite unsympathetic hands. If my surmise is correct as to the date of the work, the name of Wenceslas Hollar the engraver occurs to me as one to whom the task might have been assigned. He was in England in the early days of Charles, and the task was one which an engraver well used to making water-colour copies of the works which he was to engrave might have consented to undertake. At the same time, I cannot pretend to attach much weight to the surmise, especially as we have nothing to show that the strengthening in question did not take place at some previous date, possibly while the drawings were in France in the hands of a dealer. A note in Mr. Wornum's edition of Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting"¹ is of great interest on this question. It refers the reader to a MS. in the British Museum which has in it the following passage: "I shall not need to insist on the particulars of this manner of working (crayons), it shall suffice, if you please, to take a view of a booke of pictures by the life, by the incomparable Hans Holbein, servant to King Henry VIII. They are the pictures of most of the English lords and ladies then living, and were the patterns whereby that excellent painter made his pictures in oyl: and they are all done in this last manner of crayons. I speak of and knowe of many of them to be miserably spoyled by the injury of tyme, and the ignorance of some who formerly had the keepinge of the book, yet you will find in these ruinous remains an admirable hand, and a rare manner of working in few lines and no labour in expressing of the life and likenesses many times equal to his own oyl pictures and excelling other men's. The book hath been long a wanderer: but is now happily fallen into the hands of my noble lord the Earl Marshall (the Earl of Arundel) of England, a most eminent patron to all painters who understood the arte: and who therefore preserved this book with his life till both were lost together."

There is obviously no small obscurity about the last paragraph. It is, however, plain that the words were written after the death of the sixth Earl of Arundel, the great collector, which happened in 1645, and the

¹ Vol. i., p. 84.

wording of the paragraph leaves the impression that the event was not quite recent. The contradiction involved in the two statements that the book "is now happily fallen into the hands" of the Earl of Arundel and that he had lost it and his life together is beyond my power to explain. But the assertion that the drawings were injured by time, and by the ignorance of former keepers, seems in the latter half of it to suggest some ignorant method of dealing with them over and above the injuries of time, and it may well refer to the reinforcing of Holbein's lines by an inferior hand.

Of Holbein's technical methods after the transference of the drawing to panel we have no evidence, save that which may be obtained from the appearance of his pictures. In one or two instances, where cracks are occurring in the surface, as in the "Robert Chambers" at Vienna, caused often by shrinking of the panel in the over dry air of museums, it is unhappily possible to ascertain that Holbein prepared his panel with a thin coating of white gesso. I should estimate the thickness of the preparation at about one-twentieth of an inch. We have no clear evidence, so far as I know, of the method which Holbein followed in the preliminary stages of his painting, but it may be taken as practically certain that he followed the practice of the earlier painters—with whom his technique has more affinity than it has with those who follow him—in laying in his picture in monochrome brought to a high finish. If we may accept "The Man of Sorrows" and the "Mater Dolorosa" of Basel as pictures brought up by Holbein to a certain stage with the intention of finishing them in colour, then we may say that the monochrome ground was a warm one, and most artists would probably, after examining the finished pictures of Holbein, give their verdict in favour of his having used a warm ground for the preliminary stages of his work. But I do not know of any picture by him which is in such a condition as to give us definite information on this point. Of all the cultivated men who sat to Holbein, from Erasmus onwards, not one was sufficiently interested in art, or had sufficient prophetic insight into the future fame of the artist to leave us just the few lines of information which would have been of such value to us.

ELIZABETH DANCEY (WRONGLY CALLED LADY BARKLY)

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Barkley.



ANNE CRESACRE

WINDSOR CASTLE



CHAPTER XIII

OTHER PORTRAITS OF THE FIRST ENGLISH PERIOD,

1526-28

BESIDES the separate portraits of Sir Thomas More and his children, Holbein is known to have completed a group of the family which has disappeared, though a small preliminary sketch or arrangement is in the collection at Basel, having been apparently sent over by Sir Thomas More, or carried by the hands of Holbein on his return thither, for his friend Erasmus. The various members of the group have their names written upon them in, it is said, Sir Thomas More's handwriting, while notes and memoranda in Holbein's hand appear in parts of the drawing and show us that the sketch was undoubtedly intended as a guide for a finished group. In the centre of the picture sits Sir Thomas More himself, easily recognizable by the gold chain which he wears (sometimes wrongly described as the Chancellor's chain, but he was not yet Chancellor when this sketch was made, nor when the portrait now in the possession of Mr. Huth was painted. At Sir Thomas's left hand stands his son, John More, and a little further back, near the door, Henry Pattenson, More's jester, who probably filled other offices in More's simple household. Directly under Pattenson sits Cecilia Heron, More's daughter, and in front of her Margaret Roper, "myne own good daughter," as More wrote her in that touching last letter which he sent the day before his death. It was she who was with him almost to the last, and broke the hearts of the halberdiers by her weeping, and who was allowed by grace of the king to receive her dead father's body for his burial. The other favour which Henry had spontaneously granted was that More, like Fisher, should be beheaded rather than hanged—a favour that drew from More the hope that God would spare all other of his relations from any more such royal favours. Behind Margaret Roper, and on the extreme right of the picture, sits Alice, More's second wife—the little woman who, according to Erasmus, was neither young nor beautiful. At Sir Thomas More's right hand sits his father, Judge More, next to whom the woman holding a book is Margaretha Gigs, afterwards Clement, who had been brought up in More's household. On the extreme left is More's daughter, Elizabeth Dancy; while the young girl in the background between More and his father is Anne Crisacre, who became the wife of young John More.

The family monkey, not, I presume, the same which Erasmus knew, but a successor, is not forgotten.

Original drawings exist of Sir Thomas More, Judge More, Anne Crisacre, Cecilia Heron, Elizabeth Dancy (wrongly named the Lady Barkly), and John More, all in the Windsor collection. With regard to John More I am inclined to believe that the oil painting by Holbein in the Louvre of a young man unknown represents John More at a later date. The drawings of the More family are of the very finest quality, and are evidently wrought by Holbein with his full strength—diploma works, indeed, by which he knew he would be judged, and by which he must stand or fall at the outset of his career in his newly-adopted country. That they fully satisfied those who knew the More family best is shown by the fact that during these two years of his first English visit nearly all his sitters came from the circle of More's friends, or from among those whose tastes and positions brought them into contact with him. Foremost amongst these must be reckoned John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who, though not so intimate a friend of More as Colet or Warham, yet will go down to history more closely linked with his name, since he died the same death for the same cause some fourteen days earlier in that same summer of 1535. John Fisher was a very different type of man from More—Holbein's portrait would have told us that if history had not done so. He had indeed few traits in common with the writer of "Utopia" except his sincerity and his love of learning. The wit, the large outlook upon mankind, the quick sympathy which belonged to More were not in Fisher any more than they were in Warham. But he was honest and of blameless life and character. He had been confessor to the Lady Margaret Beaufort, and had given to her two noble Cambridge foundations, the Colleges of St. John's and Christ's, the constitution which, in a modified shape, they still enjoy. To Katharine of Aragon also he had been confessor—the only adviser, she once said, on whose sincerity and honesty she could rely—and probably the bold front which he always bore towards the question of the divorce had something in it of personal chivalry as well as of religious conviction, and we do not like him the less for it. His language on the point was always fiercer and more unequivocal than that of More. In this very year when Holbein made the drawing which we see at Windsor, namely, on June 28th, 1529, the brave old bishop had appeared before the Legate's Court to urge that the marriage could not be dissolved by any power divine or human. With equal vehemence he proclaimed against the royal supremacy over the Church. If it was accepted, he said before Convocation, it would cause the clergy of England to be hissed out of the society of God's Holy Catholic Church. It would have been well for him if he had ended his life with that protest, but he lived to bear a foolish share in the celebrated imposture of Elizabeth



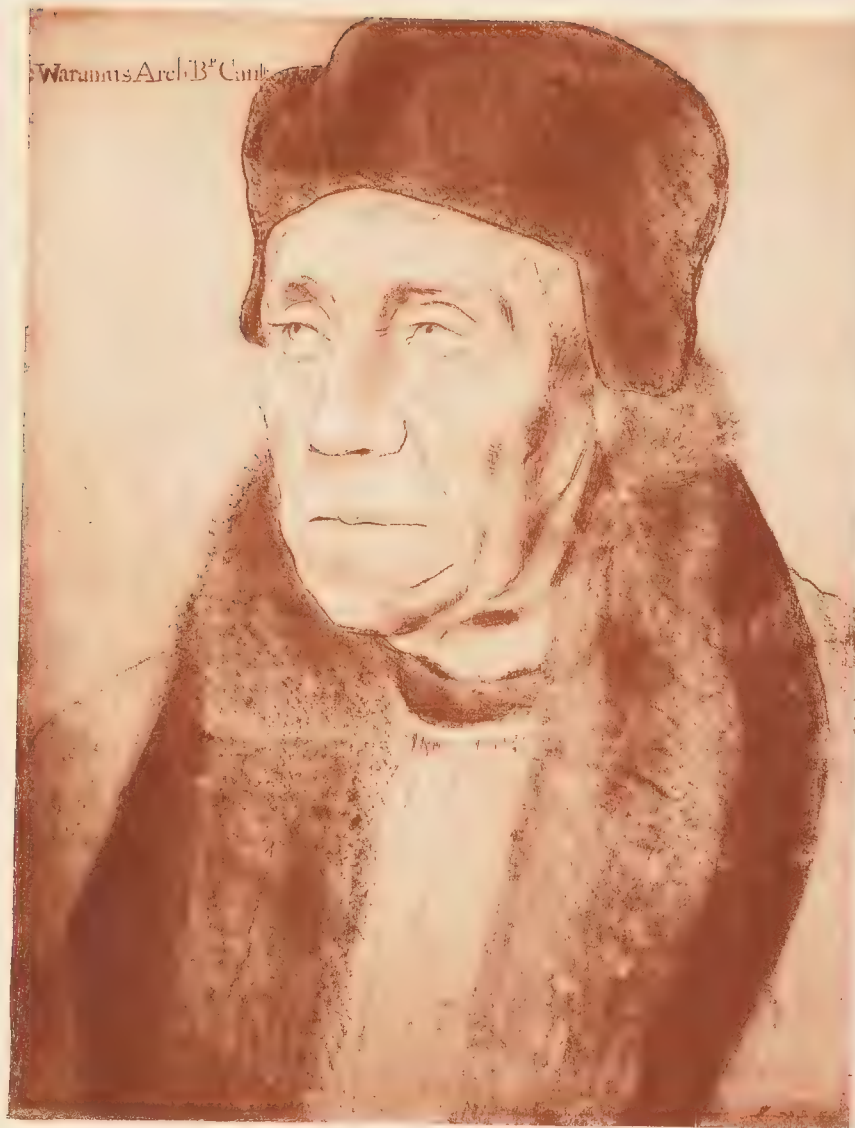
Archbishop Warham 1527
the Town



ARCHBISHOP WARHAM

WINDSOR CASTLE

Waramus Arch. B. Cant.



Barton, the Nun of Kent, who gave his name to the council as one of her abettors. Unhappily Fisher defended himself as doggedly in this case, where he was palpably in the wrong and should have wisely admitted it, as he had done in the other cases. One may see, perhaps, in that face as Holbein has shown it to us, something which tells us of a man who would never willingly do wrong, but who would be equally unwilling to admit that he had done it. Happily it was not to be his fate to suffer for his share in that foolish and superstitious piece of business. He was once more called to face the questions of the supremacy of Henry and the legitimacy of the marriage of Katharine, and no one who knew the nature of the old man could have doubted of his answer. The madness of Pope Paul, who chose that moment for sending him a cardinal's hat, hastened, though it hardly produced the end. Henry's oath, that he should soon lack a head to wear it on, was speedily and faithfully kept. There is no picture in English history more piteous and yet more noble than that of the old bishop of eighty years mounting the scaffold—going to his wedding, as he gaily called it—to die a traitor's death.

Holbein's drawing of the old bishop—the Windsor drawing is far finer than that which is in possession of the British Museum—is a miracle of intuition. No one can suppose that Holbein, a new-comer to England, little acquainted with English politics, and with little knowledge of the texture of religious questions in the country, could have had much to guide him from without to the character of the man. His guide was, in this case as always, the face of his sitter. And how he has read the man! with his pale bloodless face, his thin determined lips, his eager bright gray eyes full of nervous alertness. It is a very honest, very spiritual, but very obstinate old face. One can almost see as one looks at it the smile of scorn rising about the lips, and the flash of battle lighting the old eyes as it did that day when old Warham, ever ready with the argument from expediency, tried to convert him to the divorce and warned him that "*Ira principis initium mortis est.*" One turns from the portrait of the one man to the portrait of the other and finds once more that our interpreter has not failed us.

Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, was a man of a very different stamp from either More or Rochester. He had neither the keen wit and the high intellect of the one, nor the unflinching stubbornness of the other. He had spent a long life in harness and had been Chancellor of England until he gave place to Wolsey, for whom, indeed, he was no match either in intellect, or subtlety, or statecraft. He was the type at once of the successful ecclesiastic and of the respectable statesman. In both departments his abiding policy had been expediency, and in following that policy he had merely succeeded in being one of those who wait behind opportunity to see which way she is going, and then, having lost sight of her, remain

where they were. He could never have taken his place in the ranks of the reformers, yet he utterly failed, having hardly half attempted it, to bar their progress. He was the friend and constant companion of Colet and of More, whose minds were full of the dream of moral and intellectual reform in the Church. Yet he stirred no finger, much as he loved learning for its own sake, to advance that side of reform which might even at that late moment have saved the fabric whose safety he desired. He must, one would have thought, through their conversation have realized the danger to the Church that sprang from the corrupt condition of the spiritual courts which were in his hands. And here again he stirred no finger, so that at no time was the corruption greater. So, too, in his dealings with Henry, he sought to save his ship by jettison of its cargo, and he lived long enough to know that he had cast away both cargo and ship. There is something very pathetic in the paper written when the old man lay broken-hearted and dying, in which he protests—now that all protest is futile and that the time for it is long past—against any statutes which shall be “in derogation of the Pope of Rome or of the Apostolic See, or be to the hurt, prejudice, or limitation of the powers of the Church, or shall tend to the subverting, enervating, derogating from or diminishing the laws, customs, privileges, etc., etc., of our Metropolitan Church of Canterbury.”

It is well to turn from Warham's public acts to his private life, in which we find traits which easily explain to us how he came to be the friend of such men as Colet and of More. He was a lover of learning and generous to all scholars who needed his help—Erasmus, for example, received from him presents of £10, £20, £40, large sums in those days. He was hospitable and charitable, keeping open house to rich and poor to his own impoverishment, so that at his death there was scarcely enough money for his burial, and all the while he was himself living a most simple and frugal life, hardly even tasting wine at his own table. He was kindly to all men, provided they were not heretic or unorthodox, in which case he was capable of the same severities which Fisher and More found themselves able to approve. No reproach was uttered against his manner of life. Erasmus indeed adds the praise which sounds quaintly in our ears to-day, that he “neither hunted nor diced.” It might not occur to a modern biographer to catalogue these among the virtues of a primate. A better testimony perhaps is to be found in the fact already quoted, that he was the intimate friend and companion of men of such character as Colet and More.

The drawing of Warham, at Windsor, from which two oil portraits were painted, the one now in the Louvre collection, the other in Lambeth Palace, ranks amongst the most masterly even of Holbein's drawings. In the rendering of such a face with its strongly-marked detail, an old man's

JOHN FISHER, BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

WINDSOR CASTLE



face which time and the battle of life had furrowed and wrinkled, there was the temptation to which not only lesser artists easily yield, but to which even greater artists were liable, Dürer himself, for example, of giving us too much a map of wrinkles and furrows, and of allowing the superficially striking marks of the features to assert themselves so loudly that they express only the facts common to all old age, and fail to tell us much about the individuality of the particular old man. Dürer, as we have said, allowed himself, especially in some of his engraved portraits, to be so carried away by the technical pleasure of wreathing the face of his old men in wrinkles which were amusing to draw and gave great opportunities of interesting line work, that character is really lost, not gained, by the process. You are apt to get a most skilful, but somewhat imaginary maze of surface markings, enjoyable for the sake of the engraved line, but often obliterating the very traits of character which you want to get at in the portrait. It becomes, in fact, rather a map of old age than a living likeness of an individual old man.

Holbein does nothing of the kind. He gives you, indeed, the wrinkled texture of the somewhat sallow and leathery skin of the old man, but he does not set you thinking merely of skin and wrinkles, but rather of the somewhat pachydermatous old nature that lay below it. The eyes are weary and heavy, and there is a look of pathetic sadness in the face. One may well believe that the old man wore it at that time. It was so that he was seen, one doubts not, when he heard that his enemy the great cardinal had put some fresh slight on the privileges of his beloved see of Canterbury—it was so that he looked when he heard that men had plastered the walls of his own cathedral with gibes at the subservient old man. He wore that same look, doubtless, during those three days of doubt and distress when he presided over the meeting of Convocation which was to save itself and the clergy from the penalties of *praemunire* by agreeing to a fine of a full million of money to Henry, and by what was to most the still greater penalty of pronouncing him “only supreme head of the Church.” It was he who devised the saving compromise “so far as the law of Christ permits,” which on the fourth day enabled that dejected assembly to agree. “He who is silent seems to assent,” cried the old archbishop to his speechless audience. “Then are we all silent,” was the only answer given by a single voice in the crowd, and Warham must have known that he had both won and lost. We cannot see the other actors in that scene, unless it be by a glimpse of the pale face of Fisher in the crowd, for Holbein painted them not, but this one figure of Warham, as he sat before that great gathering, how instinct with life it becomes to us as we look at the portrait! It was a much more difficult piece of interpretation which was set to the painter when he was asked to read and discover to us the inward texture of that nature, than it was when he sat before the face of a More or a Fisher.

The result might so easily have been so commonplace. The texture of such a character as Warham's is so much more made up of what it is not than of what it is. And it is so far more difficult to paint the absence of qualities than their existence. It was easier to paint something of that look which flashed from the imaginative eyes of More than it was to give us the life-history of this kindly and dignified, but stolid, phlegmatic, and spiritually hide-bound old ecclesiastic.

The Louvre portrait differs from the Lambeth version chiefly in some details of colour—the curtain being green instead of brown behind Warham's head, and the general tone somewhat colder. It is to be noticed that the Louvre picture is somewhat drier and less limpid in its surface qualities than many of Holbein's works. The details, such as the embroidery of the vestments and the ornaments of the mitre and the crozier, are carried out with the same sense of delight which is always visible in the painter's work. The colour is greatly helped by the little patch of scarlet which is visible in the archbishop's cassock beneath the white surplice, and there are throughout passages of refined and delightful colour which seem to have come there as accidents arising from the vestments themselves, but are, of course, the result of most subtle calculation.

It is noticeable, as has been already said, that during the painter's first visit to England, 1526-1528, his portraits are almost exclusively confined to those whom we know to have been of the circle of the intimate friends of More, or those who were by their tastes and pursuits likely to have been in touch with him and with Erasmus. And when this supply was exhausted, we do not find that sitters from the Court at large, still less from the immediate circle of royalty, were added to the list. It would seem, therefore, that though Henry was at this time showing favour to More, and was at times even seen at the house in Chelsea, he was not sufficiently struck by what he saw of Holbein's work to feel any desire to employ his services. The fact carries with it the further suggestion that Holbein was not, as has been asserted, under More's roof, and that, therefore, probably the only portrait which Henry could have seen there was that of More himself,¹ the large family group not being completed till just before Holbein returned to Basel in 1528, and therefore visible only in the painter's studio. I must not claim too much for this argument, but it seems to me, so far as it goes, to be suggestive.

The identity of the drawing which bears the name of Colet at Windsor is not beyond dispute, and no finished portrait of the dean by Holbein exists wherewith we may compare it. The drawing, whether it be of Colet or no, is less desirable than many of the series, partly because it represents the figure sitting at half-length, and therefore the face is reduced in scale,

¹ This is probably the portrait now in possession of Mr. Huth.



Sir Henry Guildford, 1527
"H and son Gualle"

whereby we lose some of the force which we find in the larger drawings. On the other hand, the study at Windsor for the portrait of Sir Harry Guildford is of the highest quality.¹ The finished picture is also at Windsor, and has been more than once exhibited in the last forty years. Sir Harry Guildford was, like many an English gentleman in that great century, a man of no small versatility. He was Master of the Horse to Henry VIII., and as such was a man of prowess in outdoor sports. He was one of the king's retinue on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and he jousting at the marriage of Katharine of Aragon, and he was withal a scholar and a man of letters and of art, the friend and correspondent of Erasmus. He had the good fortune to take no marked place in politics. It must be admitted that the portrait gives us more the idea of the bluff and burly man of sport than of the thoughtful man of letters. But as helping us to fill up the picture to ourselves of one of those who stood high in the early days of Henry, and was one whom the king delighted to honour, this portrait, though it lacks the historical interest of the "More," the "Fisher" or the "Warham," is of no small value.

So, too, from the drawings of Sir Thomas Elyot, another of More's friends, and of Lady Elyot—man and wife, indeed, passed away out of royal favour soon after More's execution, it is said, because of their intimacy with More and their supposed community of view—we obtain a sight of a cultivated English lady and gentleman whose life knew no reproach, and whose house escaped both taint and disaster, a rare thing to be able to say of those who had moved freely in the Court of Henry.

In the Louvre hangs the portrait of Nicholas Kratzer, a German of Munich, which also belongs to this first English period. He was astronomer to the king. We know his salary from the account books—it was £25 a year, the same sum that was paid to Henry's French cook—and he succeeded in holding the office for thirty years without, it is said, learning as many words of English.

If this be true, Holbein's company must have been a godsend to the poor astronomer, who could have found few companions of kindred tastes among the German merchants of the Steelyard, and who must have had to fall back upon conversation in Latin, as Erasmus had had to a great extent to do when he met with a Colet or a Linacre. The picture is of that quiet, sober, thoughtful quality which marks so many of Holbein's portraits, and none more than those which he painted at this period. The face is not one of particular interest, nor is it of marked intellectual force. It is the face, however, which seems to speak of a man who might very easily become so absorbed in his own studies, without making any great discoveries

¹ The drawing of Sir Harry Guildford is one of those which are on gray unprepared paper with no preliminary wash of body colour.

through them, as to be unable to give time to such sublunary interests as learning the language of the people amongst whom he had to live. The astronomical instruments which lie beside him are wrought with that extraordinary fidelity and delight which a little later is seen at its highest level of accomplishment in the picture of "The Ambassadors." On this occasion one is inclined to think that Holbein must have had some ado to prevent the instruments becoming more interesting than the astronomer.¹

The portraits of Thomas Godsalve and his son, of Norwich, are in one frame in the gallery at Dresden, and, painted on a smaller scale than the "Warham" or the "More," are of very fine surface and quality, though the personalities which they represent are not very attractive. The study for the portrait of the son is interesting as being, among all the studies at Windsor, that which has been carried furthest in the matter of colour. The background has been washed in blue body colour and the robe in violet, the face being also carried out in the same medium.

We are without knowledge of the exact cause which brought Holbein's first English visit to a sudden conclusion. It may be that the supply of sitters seemed to have come to an end, or it may be that home sickness had begun to set in upon a young man who had left wife and child behind among the people of his own tongue. At any rate in 1528 Holbein was back in the city by the side of the Rhine. The old biographers give the date of his return as 1529, but the discovery of a document which shows that in 1528 Holbein bought a house in Basel overlooking the river, establishes not only the date of his return but also the fact that the painter must have been fairly successful in his money matters in England—far more successful than he was destined to be again in Basel, where things had gone from bad to worse.

¹ It is interesting to know that Nicholas Kratzer was at the age of thirty admitted to Fox's New College of Corpus Christi at Oxford. He was appointed by Cardinal Wolsey to lecture on mathematics, and in 1520 Tunstall described him as "Maker of the King's horologies." While at Corpus he designed two sundials, one for St. Mary's Church which existed till 1744, and another for Corpus Garden. His MS. "De Horologiis" is in Corpus Library.



Nicholas Kratzer
The Astronomer

CHAPTER XIV

SECOND VISIT TO BASEL—1528-1531

WHEN Holbein saw Basel again after his English visit, John Froben was dead, though Erasmus was still living at the house in Baumleingasse. But there can be little doubt that the death of the good printer deprived Holbein of his hope of finding much work to do for the wood-engravers. The mind of Erasmus was by its natural bent far more directed to the literary than to the artistic side of the publisher's task, and he probably lacked the technical instinct which Froben—himself apparently a practical engraver—possessed in a high degree. Hans Lützelburger, too, was dead, and had left no equal behind him. Holbein's output, therefore, of designs for the *formschneider* was far smaller in his second visit to Basel than it had been in his first. Things were very much at a standstill in Basel at the moment, and in no department was the paralysis which had fallen upon all industries felt more than in Art. The hostility which had at first displayed itself merely against such pictures as had been used for superstitious purposes, or for impostures, had spread thence by slow degrees to all religious pictures, until by a decree of the council of Basel a condemnation of their use in churches had been definitely passed. The decree had doubtless strengthened the hands of those who a little later were strong enough to carry through, with little resistance, the iconoclastic raid upon all religious art in the churches of Basel. When Holbein arrived in 1528 in the city the prospect for an artist was sorely discouraging. A glance at the list of his known works during his stay of nearly three years will show that there is no corresponding time of his art career which seems to have produced so little.

Probably the very first picture which he attacked after his arrival was the portrait of his wife Elsbeth and his two children, Philip and Katherina, which hangs now in the museum of Basel. An examination of the picture suggests at once the circumstances under which it was painted. It is on several sheets of paper, whose joins are quite visible, and which seem to have been subsequently fixed down upon a wood panel. Probably Holbein began it without any intention of making it into a finished picture, using just such material as lay ready to his hand, and as the work grew and seemed to "come," as a modern artist would say, he carried it forward to such a pitch that it became worth his while to bestow great pains on its finish

and to transfer it to a panel. This portrait is not the only instance of a similar action in Holbein's case. The "Erasmus" at Basel is also painted on a sheet of paper fixed upon a panel, and there are several similar instances. One may assure oneself that this portrait of his wife and children was taken up on the spur of the moment, perhaps a day or two after his return, and before he had gathered about him any stock of studio properties. It is quite certain that he would not have commenced what presently became a very important work on so perishable and unpromising a material as a few sheets of paper joined together. But the very circumstances of speed and spontaneity under which the picture was evidently painted in its first stages have given a force and a freedom and a largeness which is not surpassed by anything which Holbein ever produced. It is as spontaneous and broad in its handling as the freest sketch of the great portrait painters of a later age. Spontaneity—I regret the use of this most ugly phrase—is not the quality of course which impresses itself first upon us in most of Holbein's finished portraits in oil. But here we have the genius of Holbein concentrating itself for a few hours on what is the nearest approach to a brilliant, and summary, and completely seen sketch that exists among all his works in oil. He is free from all restraint, and working with the inspiration at white heat. The touch is transparent, juicy, and rich. The modelling, executed with broad and rapid, yet very subtle transitions of tone, is of masterly simplicity and directness. The realization of every detail which gives character to a portrait is as full as in his most exactly wrought portraits. There is nothing more satisfactory and more masterly—though there are many things more beautiful through the charms of the sitter—than this broadly rendered and uncompromising portrait of the painter's wife and children.

Frau Elsbeth was certainly not attractive. Her features are not merely homely, they are also heavy and uninteresting, and she is built in a solid and somewhat unwieldy mould. But Holbein has given to her that tender and affectionate movement of a mother towards the children at her knee which makes the plainest of mothers for the time being a Madonna. Frau Holbein was, it must be confessed, uncompromisingly plain. It has been suggested by some writers that in his "Solothurn Madonna" Holbein had used in creating his ideal some vision of the features of his wife. It is a large assumption that those seven years had changed the vision of Solothurn into the reality of the Basel portrait. But at this stage we find one of those theories brought in which meet us so continually in the lives of the early painters. Karel Van Mander in his "*Schilderboek*," or lives of the painters, published in 1604, had, in the absence of accurate details of Holbein's life, built up, as was common with Van Mander and biographers of his type, a story of family discord in the Holbein home. Holbein is supposed by that author, and by one or two who followed him, to have lived



ELSBETH HOLBEIN
BASEL



on unhappy terms with his wife, and an elaborate history of the matter grew out of it. There is absolutely no original material for the tale, but in works of the imagination, such as the lives left us by these biographers too often were, there is little need for original material. The rule seems to be, when in difficulty imagine a scandal. A realistic touch is added to the story through this very portrait. The red and heavy eyes of Frau Elsbeth are pointed to as the result of years of weeping. The fact that a glance at the children's eyes in the portrait shows that they also suffer from the same complaint, inherited no doubt from the mother, is to the prejudice of this remarkable piece of observation. Poor Holbein little knew, when he set down the features of his sitter, nothing extenuating, that his faithful record of this feature which did not add to the comeliness of his wife would one day be brought against him in evidence.

Nothing of the kind alluded to is at all known. What is known of Holbein's married life is briefly this: He married, apparently about 1520, a widow with one child, Elsbeth Schmid. Two children were born before 1526. The hard times in Basel seem to have driven Holbein to seek his fortunes in England. After two years' absence he returns and bestows his earnings on a house in which Elsbeth, so far as we know, lived to the end of her life. That she was not left in poverty, but supplied by Holbein with means of livelihood, is made probable by an incidental piece of information which is in our hands. When Holbein himself died the inventory of his belongings gives us no great notion that he was surrounded by this world's goods. But we happen also to have the inventory of Elsbeth's goods when in 1549 she also died, and it affords quaint reading. After mentioning furniture, crockery and a *batterie de cuisine*, it tells us of six silver goblets, spoons, etc., and a valise containing clothes belonging to her dead husband—to wit, a black biretta, a Spanish cape trimmed with velvet, a smoke-coloured pourpoint of Florentine taffeta, a pourpoint in black satin, a pourpoint in crimson silk, another in black damask. This apparel was evidently what he had left behind him in his last visit to Basel in 1538, and we recognize in it those silks which had so excited the admiration of Iselin. But the cups which appear in the inventory show clearly that Frau Elsbeth was in no state of want. It is far from improbable that they were some of the presents which Holbein had received—as we know he did on one occasion from Henry VIII.—from some of his sitters, and which he had carried over to Basel with him, or had sent over. The home at Basel was evidently not ill found.

We may, however, fairly leave this quite gratuitous domestic scandal with which Karel Van Mander has enlivened his biography of Holbein, which the portrait of Elsbeth for a moment has compelled us to notice. It is the one surviving masterpiece which we have from Holbein's second

Basel period, and as we look at it and remember that it brought, so far as we know, no sitters to his easel, we can thereby realize that things were indeed come to a sorry pass in Basel, which ten years before had been a place of pilgrimage and rest for the learned of all nations, and was now by them deserted and given over to religious strife. The council of Basel seem, however, to have recognized the fact that since they had Holbein again inside their gates they would do well to take advantage of the opportunity. Nor can they be said to have been quite illiberal. It will be remembered that a portion of the inner walls of the Rathaus which had been originally included in their contract with Holbein had been left unpainted, and they had admitted the justice of his plea that the work already accomplished by him was out of proportion to the sum which he received. They now, standing in no fear of the ratepayer, even in that time of stress, agreed to pay him seventy-two gulden for the completion of the empty spaces. The wall paintings, as we have already explained, were allowed to perish with all the rest in the Rathaus; but the two small-sized original sketches are preserved at Basel. One represents the Elders of Israel appealing to Rehoboam; the other is the Meeting of Saul and Samuel, while a third appears to have existed, but no sketch has survived, of Hezekiah breaking the Idols, in complimentary allusion, no doubt, to the action of the people in Basel in destroying the pictures and images of their churches—a subject which I fear that Holbein may have painted with his tongue in his cheek.

The design of the Rehoboam, a washed drawing in Indian ink with slight touches of colour, is very broadly and simply handled, and though, as we have had to say so often before, it can give us no idea of the final decorative effect when it was transferred to the wall for which it was designed, yet we can see from it the clearness and dramatic force with which Holbein once more tells his story. The king sits crowned on a raised throne beneath a rich canopy whose curtain it is noticeable displays the fleur-de-lys many times repeated. He stoops forward clenching his left fist towards the group of counsellors who stand before the throne. At his right hand an attendant holds a scourge. At the back the scene is filled in with a rich Renaissance arcading within which sits the queen, and under which courtiers in groups are conversing. There are the materials here, undoubtedly, for the richest decorative effects, and that the other necessary elements for an impressive work are not absent we can see from the sketch itself. One may notice here that the tendency of Holbein in his early days to make his figures somewhat short and broad is plainly visible in this drawing, which in all probability was that which he had prepared before 1522. It is to be supposed that in the finished work which he now executed after the interval of so many years he was able to correct this feature.

COSTUME OF BASEL: ONE OF A SET

BASEL



The other subject, the meeting of Saul with Samuel after his conquest of the Amalekites, is even a finer composition. Samuel, a grandly-designed figure on the left of the composition, advances with his left arm pointing fiercely towards the herd of oxen which is being driven down from the height on which is seen the blazing city. "What meaneth then this lowing of the oxen which I hear?" and Saul is seen advancing in front of his host, with his right hand held out to greet the prophet with the unctuous words, "Blessed art thou of the Lord, I have fulfilled all the commandment of the Lord." The difference between the stern, strong attitude of Samuel and the slightly wheedling approach of Saul is wonderfully expressive. But the portion of the design which most impresses one, and which most fills one with regret that we cannot see it as it finally appeared, is the mass of advancing horsemen who follow a little in the rear of Saul. It is a finely-conceived mass of moving men, who convey, indeed, all the idea of an advancing body of troops, without confusion of the design. Holbein has used the spears of his warriors with much the same masterly sense of composition as Velazquez in the "Surrender of Breda" or Piero della Francesca in his fresco at Arezzo. They not only break up what would otherwise be an empty space of sky, but they impart a strong sense of movement and also of numbers to the host below. The individual figures of the men are strongly and vividly designed, and they succeed in impressing one, as so few figures thus arrayed in classical costume ever succeed in doing, as living and moving soldiers and not as theatre supernumeraries. The flames of the burning city, rolling into the sky, do for the left-hand side of the composition what the spears of the horsemen do for the right.

It has been suggested by Dr. Woltmann that these two subjects painted on the walls of the Rathaus of Basel in 1829-30 have reference to the condition of Basel with regard to the rest of Germany at that time, when the moment of her separation from it was approaching. But it must be remembered that these subjects had been decided on for the Rathaus so early as 1522, when no such strained relations existed. I am only able to see in them two examples, set visibly before the eyes of all men in the public hall of the city, of the evil effects of bad government, and of the selfwill of rulers untempered by the laws of God. Such a reference is quite in keeping with the spirit in which such subjects were commonly placed before the citizens of the law-abiding cities of Germany.

Paid thus with his seventy-two gulden, Holbein was left to look for further work in Basel. That he did not find it in great abundance is proved by the fact that he was ready to accept fourteen gulden as a commission for repainting the two faces of the clock on the Rheingate, which had in it one of those uncouth mechanical figures in which the German taste of that day delighted. One wonders whether Holbein upon his scaffold, painting the

front of his clock, turned his thoughts back again sometimes to the house at Chelsea and the palace at Lambeth.

We find therefore that the recorded earnings—of course there must have been more—of Hans Holbein during the three years of his second stay in Basel amounted to under one hundred florins; and we need feel no manner of surprise—neither need we call into the explanation the imagined angularities of Frau Elsbeth—that the painter, who had probably exhausted the greater part of his English savings, resolved once more to try his fortunes in the northern island.

Before he left Basel, or on his way back to England, he paid, it would seem, a visit to Erasmus at Freiburg im Bresgau. The small circular medallion portrait at Basel of Erasmus appears to have been executed during this second visit. The portrait seems to show Erasmus older than will agree with any period previous to Holbein's first departure for England, and, since Erasmus died in 1536, it cannot belong to the later passing visit to Basel which Holbein made in 1538. It is an admirable and expressive little work, which suffers more than most from reproduction.

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN TO ENGLAND—THE STEELYARD PERIOD

HOLBEIN probably reached London early in the year 1532, and he had not been long there before it repented the authorities of Basel that they had let go from their city one whose work had been so good and withal so cheap. And therefore in the September of that year they sent to him a letter urging him to return to look after his wife and children, and with the further inducement of a promise of an income of thirty pieces a year. But Holbein turned a deaf ear.

Much had happened in England during the years of his absence. Late in 1529 the great cardinal had fallen, and More had succeeded to his post as Lord Chancellor. And now in this same year of 1532, within a month or two of Holbein's return to England, More himself was to resign his office (May 16), and to retire to his home at Chelsea quietly to wait till the inevitable storm broke. For events were advancing rapidly, and the causes which were to change and make not merely the history of England, but with it also the history of Europe itself, were already shaping themselves. The divorce of Katharine, long a burning question, was now the thought uppermost in all minds, and was destined to be fraught with consequences that hardly the most far-seeing could have forecast. Henry was on the point of cutting that Gordian knot for himself by his marriage with Anne Boleyn, and, in so cutting it, to sever himself and the country from the power of the Pope. Politics, religion, social life were all in a state of upheaval. And the men and women who were to play the chief and often the most tragic parts in each and all of the most stirring events of our national life were destined to be amongst Holbein's sitters. To be called upon to be the recorder of such men and women at such a time must have had, to a man of Holbein's mind, a fascination about it which made it little likely that he should listen to the voices of the good burghers of Basel, charm they never so wisely.

It must have hit strangely well with that grim humour of Holbein's, and that dramatic insight of his which produced the "Imagines Mortis" and the "Alphabet of Death," to find himself amongst the men and the women, noble and ignoble, brave and cowardly, generous and mean, who were all playing their parts now in a dance of death in 1532 far more real than any which he had imagined. The stage was ready and the dance was

set. As he saw Death laying his clutches upon queen and upon chancellor, upon baron and bishop, abbot and monk, knight and lawyer, and merchant and pauper, how often he must have thought of those imaginings of his which Lützelburger had cut for him years before, but which lay as yet hidden away in some cupboard at Basel or at Lyons.

Wherever he may have had his lodging during his first sojourn in England, it is quite certain that in the early part of this second visit he was housed somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Steelyard, the Hanseatic settlement of the German merchants, which occupied a portion of the river bank above London Bridge at the point where Cannon Street Railway Station now stands. The statement sometimes made that he had apartments in the Steelyard is manifestly incorrect, since it was one of the strictest of the many strict rules which governed that commercial monastery that no one should be entertained within it who was not of the Hanseatic community. That he lived in the neighbourhood for the sake of fellowship with his compatriots is all that we can assert. An old tradition existed that he was lodged in one of the houses which stood on old London Bridge, and certainly it is a position which an artist might well have chosen for himself. But in the absence of more definite information, which is hardly likely to be now discovered, we must be content to know that until his appointment as King's Limner and his removal to Whitehall, probably in 1536, he was established near London Bridge and near the Steelyard, which provided him with most of his sitters.

The German Steelyard, otherwise called the Guildhall of the Germans of the Hanseatic League, obtained its name probably from the great steelyard or weighing machine which stood at its entrance and recorded the weights of all its exports and its imports.

The German colony of traders dated back, in its first beginnings, to a period long before the development of the Hanseatic League. It owed its chief privileges to those two warlike and impecunious sovereigns, Richard I. and Edward III. The latter, indeed, had always had a leaning towards his German supporters since he had obtained from the merchants of Cologne so substantial an advance upon his crown, which lay there in pawn. He conveyed to the Steelyard community, in return for moneys which came into the privy purse, monopolies which proved for nearly two centuries a paralysis to the enterprise of the English merchants. Klipfish from Norway, tallow and oak from the Baltic, woven stuffs from the Netherlands and from Augsburg, wines from the Rhineland, and a score of other commodities, were the monopolies of the Hanseatic body, which came to be detested more and more, and with sound reason, as the spirit of English adventure grew with the growth of its people. Historians have, perhaps, never yet taken enough into account the great, though wholly unintended,



George Gize 1533
Berlin

effect which these monopolies granted to Germany over the English trade with Europe had in helping to drive English adventure into the distant fields of newly-discovered lands, and thereby laying the foundation of the great colonial empire which grew out of that spirit of merchant venture in the far seas. For that as yet invisible result the English of the Tudor days could not be expected to feel grateful. Already in Henry's reign the Hanseatic monopoly, always deeply unpopular, was beginning to totter. It lasted till Elizabeth's reign, and passed away under her hand to the destined resting-place of all monopolies. Meanwhile the German Steelyard protected—as indeed did all the Hanseatic colonies wherever stationed—their existence and their privileges with regulations which partook at once of the discipline of a trade guild, a monastery, and a modern public school. Besides possessing these regulations in their completeness, we are also able—though no stone of the English Steelyard remains *in situ*—to see in the German wharf, the “Tuske-Brygge,” as it is still called, at Bergen in Norway the actual houses which were employed for a colony of this description. The plan, which might have been almost suggested by a Carthusian monastery, consisted of a number of small separate houses, each containing bedroom and sitting-room for a merchant, with back apartments and storage for the workmen and clerks. The buildings were protected both on the river front and towards Thames Street by a fortified wall and gateways, whose gates were closed at nine o'clock each night, like those of a college. No married men were allowed to lodge within the precincts—indeed, women were excluded as rigidly as from a monastery—nor were any guests allowed who were not of the Hanseatic community. The object of all this exclusiveness, it is needless to explain, was to preserve the solidarity of this body of trade monopolists, and to present an unbroken front against all the inroads which social relations with foreigners might be expected presently to introduce. Once, when a master of the order, who had deserved very well of the body, desired a dispensation to bring his wife within the boundaries, he was incontinently refused. Celibacy was the law of the Steelyard till merchants and celibates were swept away for ever by the virgin queen. The dislike which was felt for this exclusive, and it must be owned tyrannous, body of monopolists was hardly outweighed by the popularity of the celebrated wine-house just outside their walls, where men of all sorts and conditions resorted, especially on a Sunday afternoon, to drink Rhenish out of German beakers. The poor Germans, conscious of their own unpopularity, sought further to propitiate public opinion by means which should reach the heart through a different channel. They were much in evidence at coronations and court pageants with profuse and visible displays of loyalty, for one at least of which the art of Holbein was called in aid. They lay indeed at this time under no

small suspicion. Hailing from the fatherland of Luther, it was natural that not a few should have imbibed his doctrines and should be finding forbidden consolation in his writings in a land where they were solitary and strangers. Outwardly, indeed, they thought it well to preserve the character of the colony for orthodoxy by expending the fines imposed for breaches of regulations in candles of prodigious size kept burning in All Hallows church. But when in the year 1527 it was noised that a cargo of 20,000 copies of Tyndal's New Testament had been landed at the Steelyard, Sir Thomas More, who had already taken fright at Lutheranism, came down to make inquisition. The bulk of the copies had already got themselves dispersed, and the merchants vainly protested that there was not such a thing as a heretic in the place. Copies enough were discovered to make a little procession of five "men of the Stillyard," who, clad in strange penitential garments, followed behind Barnes the heretic in his parade thrice round the bonfire at the Great Northern Rood—that is, the great crucifix at the north end of Paul's Churchyard—and solemnly cast in their editions of the forbidden book into the flames. Then they went back to their commerce at the German wharf, which thenceforth they took care to carry forward without the corrupting presence of the New Testament, for no further heretics are recorded from that time forward, and by the time that Holbein was amongst them they had so far propitiated Sir Thomas More that the chancellor, it is said, wrote for them the Latin couplets which accompanied the "Triumph of Riches" that Holbein painted for them; which shows indeed that the Germans had come to know the value of orthodoxy as a commercial asset, and also that they were judges enough of human nature to understand the vulnerable side of a scholar.

It was amongst these men, and those who were in touch with them, that Holbein was for the next few years to find his sitters. They were, doubtless, prosaic subjects, men without a history, men into whose lives little of the heroic could be expected to enter. Their only opportunity of playing any part in the stirring drama of that day in England was confined to an occasional parade round a bonfire, with just the further possibility that if they were caught erring again they might themselves constitute the bonfire. There is no danger, therefore, of our being led away by the glamour of their historic interest into overrating the artistic value of their portraits. If Holbein had been able at any time to do less than his best here would have been at once his most wholesome discipline. Of art these excellent German merchants were perhaps no great connoisseurs, but they were shrewd judges of their money's worth, and had probably their own ideas as to whether a portrait was a true likeness or not. And they demanded, one may be sure, not merely exact likenesses of themselves, but faithful renderings of such objects as made part and parcel of their daily occupation

in the merchant's office. The series of Steelyard portraits which Holbein put forth, so far as we may judge them by those which remain to us—probably less than a moiety of those which he painted—do not fall short in any artistic quality of his great historical portraits. We may take, as a typical example, one which was painted in the first year of his renewed English sojourn, and which may have even been the first which he executed for his friends of the German colony. This is the portrait of the merchant George Gyze, which now hangs in the Berlin Gallery. It shows us a fair-complexioned light-haired German of thirty-four years (we learn this from the inscription), who was evidently dainty in his dress and a man of many affairs. He wears a dark cap and overcoat, from under which proceed a pair of rose silk sleeves. The linen at the throat is of the very finest. He is opening a letter, as we learn from the address, to himself from his brother, and his face, which is neither very intellectual nor very interesting, but just a plain business face, wears that peculiar set expression with which so many people do open their letters, important or unimportant. The little office or counting-house in which he sits is full of the small requirements of office life, inkstand and writing materials, pens and emery box, string-holder, keys, scissors, letters, scales and boxes and cases of several sorts. At his right elbow is a glass vase holding two or three cut carnations, from which a recent German has argued that this was a newly-made bridegroom, since the carnation is the token of love. But the stern laws of the Hanseatic Guilds forbade any such connubial felicity, and compel us to see in George Gyze merely a happy young bachelor who was fond of a flower.

The accessories of the picture, which are here in great variety, almost too great a variety, are painted with a fidelity and a realism which even in Holbein's work has scarcely an equal unless we find it in the "Ambassadors," or in the "Sieur de Morette." For example, a worn quill pen lies on the table, and Holbein has succeeded in giving us every variety of texture that one sees in the natural object, from the smooth glistening surface of the portion against the feather, and the pithy surface of the same where a strip of feather has been torn away, to the actual quill with its blurred purplish look where the ink has spread up the inside. A similar piece of painting will be found in the "Derick Tybis," another Steelyard portrait, at Vienna. Realism cannot be carried further, though the means of arriving at it may be, as in the case of a Hals or a Velazquez, entirely different. And in selecting this particular quill pen to draw the reader's attention to in the picture, I do so merely to point to the peculiarly close observation of nature and the intense delight in rendering all natural objects exactly as he had observed them which from earliest to latest marks Holbein. He possessed this minute observation, and the corresponding love of precise rendering, to such a degree that if it had not been accompanied in him by other qualities

the very highest which an artist can possess, he might have been nothing higher than the most imitative of property painters. Yet even so the most consummate of the Dutchmen who ever painted texture and surface would have had to do him reverence.

No doubt in bestowing this extraordinary care and skill on these natural objects in the portrait of Gyze, and, generally speaking, in all the Steelyard portraits which followed it, Holbein had a special reason beyond the mere delight in the artistic accomplishment. This picture of Gyze was, in all probability, a test picture, a diploma work by which his credit was to stand or fall amongst the community in which his lot was cast. It was work which would captivate his critics, though not if it were inserted at the expense of a true likeness of the man. He goes, therefore, to what he must himself have felt to be the very extreme point of imitative realism. If he had gone beyond, and had made his portrait of that ball of string which hangs above Gyze's head more the object to look at than Gyze's own head, he might, or he might not, have been forgiven by the Steelyard critics, but he would certainly not have been forgiven by those who were to judge him thereafter, he would certainly have not been forgiven by himself. And he prevents you from feeling your first and foremost interest in the books and the seals and the ball of string, not by painting them less interestingly—you might cut each one out separately and keep it by itself, it would be an interesting and beautiful six inches of paint—but by making the merchant still the most interesting thing there. All the other accessory objects, being proper to a merchant and his work, become absolutely a part of him, and do not offend you by crying out one by one that they possess a separate existence, and that you must look at them first whether you like it or no.

Holbein has in this picture been very bold in his colour. He has placed Gyze in a background of willow green, formed by the paint of the woodwork of the panels and shelves. This colour is deliciously broken and varied by the signs of wear and tear, the rubbing off of paint from the edges of the shelves, and a score of small contrivances which, though they appear to be mere accidents of the true nature of the painted wood, are placed there with masterly calculation. Black and rose against willow green does not sound a combination which every artist could handle successfully. Nor, indeed, is it. But the portrait of George Gyze is a beautiful and extremely refined piece of harmonized tints.

It is to be remarked that neither in the case of George Gyze, nor in any of the Steelyard series, have the original sketches survived. Of these said portraits I may enumerate the following, excusing myself from exact description in each case, where it could serve no purpose except to weary the reader. Perhaps the next in order of merit after the "Gyze" should be

placed the "Derich Tybis" of Vienna (1533), the portrait of a man unknown (1533), now at Berlin, but formerly the property of Sir John Millais, "A Merchant" (1532), in the Schönbrunn Gallery, Vienna (said, however, to be a member of the Cornish family of Trelawney), and a portrait at Windsor (1532), which from the interpretation of the address on the letter (open, however, to much doubt) is asserted to be a portrait of Hans of Antwerp, the king's jeweller, for whom Holbein made many designs, and whom he left as his executor. Another portrait of the same date is the "Ambros Fallon" at Brunswick. The portrait of Robert Cheseman at the Hague, now known to be a gentleman of Dormanswell near Norwood, who was long described in error as "The Falconer of Henry VIII.," bears date of 1533, and is merely the portrait of one who took his pleasure in hawking. He holds a peregrine hooded upon his gloved wrist, a magnificent piece of painting, in which it is hard to say whether man or hawk is the most sympathetically understood.

The beautiful portrait of Derich Born or de Born at Windsor Castle (1533) is often described as that of one of the Steelyard merchants. Mr. W. F. Dickes has suggested that the portrait is that of the son of Theodoric de Born, printer of Deventer in Holland. The general type of the sitter certainly agrees well enough with that ascription, seeming as it does to belong to one whose pursuits were intellectual. This portrait was formerly hung so high and in so bad a light that it was impossible to recognize its true merits. But recently it has been taken down and hung in a good position, and displays itself in its true beauty as one of those restrained and thoughtful portraits which Holbein loved to paint. There are, it may be observed, none of the signs of the counting house which Holbein often gave in his portraits of the Steelyard merchants. On the other hand, it is most probable that it was through his Steelyard connection that Holbein counted de Born amongst his sitters, and it may be safely reckoned as one of that cycle. Few finer or more enjoyable works have come from his hand.

It was from his connection with the Steelyard, however, that an occasion arose of displaying himself in public in a manner which, though it probably brought him little fame with the crowd, who gaze but who do not inquire, was yet calculated to draw attention to him from those whose notice was worth his having. In the summer of 1533, when Anne Boleyn, secretly married to Henry in the January of that year, was to make her triumphal entry into London for her coronation, the German colony, mindful of past bonfires, and still more mindful of that disestablishment which they knew to be hanging over them, resolved to outdo all classes by a visible display of loyalty on a grand scale. They erected at the corner of Gracechurch Street, an important point of the route through the City, a triumphal arch

under which the procession, with Anne on her horse-litter, "sitting in her hair," as Cranmer expressed it, must necessarily pass on her way from the Tower to Westminster. The carrying out of this project was given to their countryman Holbein, for the whole offering was to be by and through Germans. He accordingly prepared a scheme for a great central arch with two smaller arches at the side in the manner of a Roman arch of triumph. On the summit was a representation, either in sculpture or more probably by living persons—a *tableau vivant*, in fact—of Apollo surrounded by the nine Muses, an allegorical expression of the supremacy of Henry in the cultivated arts and sciences. The pen-and-ink sketch for this scheme is in the Print Room at Berlin, and is evidently a rapid and spontaneous setting down of a first idea. It is far freer and bolder, and with less elaboration of parts and details than we are used to in the drawings of Holbein. For example, the panellings of the arch are indicated hastily and with no attempt at careful exactness. He has given merely enough to show to himself and to others how the effect would be likely to come. And the drawing must be reckoned, and all artists will certainly reckon it, as amongst the most delightful and suggestive which Holbein has left to us. The design of the group above gives a pyramidal shape, culminating in the figure of Apollo, a young man in Court costume, seated, holding in his left hand a harp, while with his right hand outspread he guides the harmonies of the choir beneath. The fountain of Parnassus, Hippocrene, a very well-ordered poetic source, contained in a shapely Renaissance basin, spouts beneath the feet of the god. It streamed all night with Rhenish after the coronation. Two of the chief muses, Calliope and Polyhymnia, very graceful figures, especially that on the right, are seated with viol and lute on either side the fountain. It may well have been a very lovely feature of that gorgeous pageant when it was translated into the life. It may or it may not have caught the eye of Henry himself as he rode beneath, and have served to remind him of his loyal Germans—he had a shrewd notion of the value of flattery as of a good many other things, however—but it certainly did not for the present bring the name of Holbein into the list of Court painters. By the time that Holbein was to enter upon office as a king's limner in 1536, that joyful pageant was long forgotten, and poor Anne was to take part in a very different procession, which also started from the Tower.¹

So for the present Holbein has to be content still with such commissions as his grave commercial countrymen of the Steelyard can afford him.

¹ We are told that Anne rode on a horse-litter beneath a golden canopy hung with silver bells, her horses draped in white and gold. She herself sat with her hair down—it was her chief claim to beauty, and, like her eyes, was dark brown, and on this occasion it flowed from beneath a diadem of gold and precious stones, and was itself starred with jewels.

APOLLO AND THE MUSES. SKETCH FOR A TRIUMPHAL ARCH

BERLIN PRINT ROOM



But it is highly possible that the sight of that incomparable procession, and the fitness which Holbein had displayed on that occasion for pompous decoration, suggested to the Hanseatic merchants the decoration of their great hall by the two large processional pictures which they now commissioned the painter to execute, namely, the "Triumph of Poverty" and the "Triumph of Riches."

These two great decorative pieces by Holbein, whose loss is even more deplorable than that of the wall paintings of Basel and Lucerne, were not painted on the plaster of the wall, but on canvas, in distemper. Black and white alone were employed, heightened with gold, and with little or no colour anywhere, so far as we can learn. They remained in their position after the date of the suppression of the Hanseatic monopolies by Queen Elizabeth in 1598, and they were seen in 1574 by Federigo Zuccherò, whose enthusiasm showed itself, not only in a practical form by his making careful copies, but also by the unstinted praise which he gave to them as the finest works of their kind in existence. For this in that age, when to many minds there was hardly another painter save Raffaello, is the logical interpretation which we must put upon Zuccherò's often-repeated assertions that they were "equal to," and again "superior to," anything which Raffaello d'Urbino had ever done. That was obviously Federigo Zuccherò's way of saying they had no equal anywhere. They found great admirers, too, among Englishmen who were no mean judges in their day. The evil days of the Steelyard had probably left the merchants little margin for the due preservation of works of art. For eight years forward from 1598 the place was untenanted, and at last, in the reign of James I., the Hanseatic league presented the pictures, now sadly neglected, to Prince Henry, a great lover of art, at whose death they seem to have passed to that same Earl of Arundel who once, as we have seen, owned the Windsor drawings. Probably they went the way of the other works of art at the Arundel sale late in the seventeenth century. They are heard of again in Flanders, and for the last time, by a chance notice, in Paris. And since that day all record of them has been lost.

We are not, however, without knowledge, though imperfect, of the character of the design. A sketch by Holbein for the "Triumph of Riches" (Plutus) is in the Louvre, while a copy of the "Triumph of Poverty" enables us to see the connection of ideas which unites the two subjects. But all hope of justly comparing the great decorative works of Holbein with the great series by Mantegna must be put aside amongst those many other lost opportunities in Art which we must accept with resignation. It is one more of the might-have-beens in Art, but it is rarely profitable to compare the imperfect records or projects of one man with the finished visible achievements of another. I must, therefore, resist the obvious temptation at this point to compare Holbein with Mantegna, and simply see what the

great German had to say to us and show us, as far as we know it, in his two great processional works.

The Louvre sketch gives us the idea of a superb decorative possibility which must have appealed, not only to the artistic sense through its rhythm and movement and largeness of feeling, but must have told its story quite completely and clearly to the intelligence of the beholder. That the latter may be left in no manner of doubt, however, and that he may have his mind free to enjoy and assimilate both the luxury of the art and the moral of the teaching, a label or title is attached to every allegorical personage throughout. The god Plutus (Riches) is carried in guise of an old man bent double over the sacks of gold beneath him, at the end of a great chariot in the front of which sits Fortune, who scatters gold, while her mantle floats in the air above inflated as a sail—it is to be noted that the wind is blowing it backwards to convey the thought that Fortune often acts as a brake upon the progress of wealth. Ratio (Reason) drives the car, which is drawn by four horses, the two wheelers being Usury and Contract, who are held back by stately female figures at their heads, Justice and Fairness (*Justicia*, *Aequalitas*), the leaders in like manner, *Impostura* and *Avaritia*, being in the hands of *Bona Fides* (Good Faith) and *Liberalitas*. Good Faith is a most noble figure, holding back her horse, *Imposture*, with concentrated force—a splendid opportunity for Holbein's art; while *Liberalitas* sits on the back of her steed *Avaritia* and flogs him to more speed. Along the side of the car and behind it walk those who have been distinguished for their right use or their wrong use of riches, or who have perished by means of them, as *Crispinus*, *Ventidius*, *Midas*, *Themistocles*, and one who would have liked them, but could not reach them, *Tantalus*. *Cleopatra* stands a shameless figure just visible in the rear, while the whole procession is brought up by *Nemesis*. Here was an allegory which all who read might understand in an age when all who cared anything for art or letters were steeped in the knowledge of classical allusion.

The "Triumph of Poverty" presents the exact converse of the "Triumph of Riches," completing the whole idea. Just as the progress of Riches has to be checked, guided, attended by the restraining virtues of Justice, Fairness, Good Faith, and Liberality, so the retrogression of Poverty has to be urged forward, helped, encouraged, husbanded, by *Moderatio* (Temperance), *Diligentia*, *Sollicitudo* (Care), and Labor. The chief figure, Poverty, by whom sits *Infortunia* (Misfortune), rides in a hut-like car drawn by two donkeys, *Stupiditas* and *Ignavia* (Cowardice), and two oxen, *Pigritia* (Laziness) and *Negligentia*. But *Spes* (Hope) sits driving, and *Industria* is not far behind. *Memoria* and *Usus* hand out tools, axe and flail and hammer, to the unhelpful poor. A crowd of poor wretches wander behind.

Here, again, the allegory is self-evident, and loses rather than gains by enlargement. Doubtless the "Triumph of Riches" was to an artist the more attractive of the two subjects, offering more fascinating opportunities by the necessary fullness of its forms, the richness of its accessories, and the strength of its movement, for decorative treatment. Perhaps, too, the moral it was to convey was more needed at that day of the Steelyard's existence, and therefore it may have been well that it should have held a higher place by reason of its attractiveness. There was, perhaps, more need to restrain the commercial instincts of a great trading body than to spur them out of poverty. But though we can but close this chapter with the confession which we have had to make so often before, and which it is wisest to make quite frankly, that we are not in a position to realize, except by conjecture and comparison, the true effect of these probably splendid works, yet we are in a position to say that allegorically at least the subject was finely thought and truly stated. Amongst the many pictures, allegorical or other, which since Holbein's day have decorated the walls of an exchange, a bourse, a chamber of commerce, in this country or in that, it is to be noticed that the blessings, the beauties, the comforts which result from trade and commerce have been copiously enlarged upon, and often enough gorgeously set forth. But the plain-spoken lessons which Holbein was ready to make his pictures proclaim, and which the German merchants of the Hansa were ready to accept and to hang within their guildhall, are absent for the most part from "the painted book" which the modern successors of Gyze and Derich Tybis and Hans of Antwerp may read in the writing on their walls.

Before we pass to another subject brief mention should be made of a drawing at Windsor, the "Visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon," which, both by its style and its subject, seems to belong to this same period, and was doubtless the outcome of the same inspiration, and from the same source, which had produced the great canvases of the Steelyard. It is a drawing in silver-point washed with Indian ink and heightened with white, the details of the ornaments which occur throughout the drawing being heightened with gold and here and there a very slight touch of colour. It is one of the most masterly and most finished of the works of this kind which Holbein has left to us.

This drawing has been appealed to very frequently as a distinct proof of the influence of Mantegna upon Holbein, and it is impossible to deny that as one looks at it the thought of Mantegna rises to the mind. But if we proceed to analyze the causes which produce these first impressions upon us we shall find them to consist in the employment of certain common elements which in the hands of two artists of entirely independent aim may yet produce similarity of effect. The use by both men of the technical medium

of gray and white and gold in body colour or distemper prepares the way for this impression. And in the use of that monochrome method a certain statuesque treatment is forced upon Holbein and creates in our mind a further affinity with Mantegna. Yet if the reader will take with him a photograph of the Holbein drawing and stand with it before the "Triumph of Julius Caesar" by Mantegna at Hampton Court, he will see how completely individual each man is, and how true to himself. In an earlier chapter of this book we have shown how probable it is that in his early days at Basel Holbein may, by contact with the engravings of Mantegna, have first learnt how to see the rhythm and the movement of processional subjects. No man is ever so original but that he learns unconsciously to see as others whom he admires have seen before him. Without this *lampadephoria*, this passing on of the torch from runner to runner as Art runs its great race, all the lamps of art would soon be extinguished. And it may well be that Holbein, as we have already agreed, learnt early to look for the same motives as the great Italian had looked for. But Holbein, when he painted the Triumphs of Poverty and of Riches, and designed the "Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon" (it was never carried out, so far as we know, in a finished picture), was seeing with entirely his own eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE AMBASSADORS"—THE "SIEUR DE MORETTE"

IT is a matter of no small disappointment to us that England, having been the home of Holbein during a full half of his artistic career and the scene of so many of his artistic triumphs, should to-day possess so remarkably few genuine examples of his finished work. The galleries of the continent hold many a masterpiece which long ago passed away from England never to return. The masterpieces which have remained behind with us are few in number, and have often suffered sadly by repainting, so that the number of panels in England in which we can see the genuine handiwork of one who was so identified with our country that he has even been audaciously claimed as of the English school, is strangely small. In revenge, a perfect population of spurious works, and works by followers and imitators, have been labelled with his name. At the great portrait exhibition held in 1866 it was calculated by Woltmann, who is quoted by His, that of sixty-six works exhibited under the name of Holbein nine only could be accepted as coming from the hand of the master. The same authority asserts that of the works in English country houses which bear the painter's name two genuine to seven spurious is a fair estimate of the proportion. Since that time no doubt a certain number of the claimants have retired into obscurity, or have accepted minor names; but it still remains true that there is no artist of any school, or of any date, whose reputation has been so threatened by the extraordinary number of inferior works which have been wildly attributed to him. The desire to possess a picture by Holbein which this wholesale attribution to him of other men's works indicates is at least a proof of an admiration which would have been better exhibited by preserving with greater jealousy the works of Holbein which from time to time have left our shores, or were allowed to perish by neglect, or to disappear by oblivion.

Up to the year 1891 our National Gallery did not possess one example of Holbein's work. At this moment, however (1902), there hang—one by right of possession and one by courtesy of loan—two masterpieces, "The Ambassadors" and the "Christina, Duchess of Milan," which more than atone for the absence of many that should have been there. Of the "Christina" we must speak in a later chapter; of "The Ambassadors," which was painted in the year 1533, a brief account is here necessary.

The picture,¹ like many others by this painter, has known its vicissitudes and has been on its travels. It is heard of first in France, where it was, a little before the year 1792, in possession of J. B. P. Le Brun, the author of the book "*Galerie des Peintres*," but better known perhaps as the husband of Madame Vigée Le Brun. The indefatigable research of Mr. W. F. Dickes has shown that Le Brun acquired the picture at the Beaujon sale, on April 25th, 1787, where it appeared as Lot 166is, described as the portraits of two ambassadors, "MM. de Selve et d'Avaux." Le Brun says that he had sold it and that it was then in England, and within a year or two of that date (1792) it passed into the hands of Lord Radnor, and, with the portrait of Erasmus, hung at Longford Castle till in 1891 it became the property of the nation. Meanwhile the identity of the two persons represented in it had been the subject of perpetual controversy. Whatever might be said about M. de Selve, it was quite certain that the other person could not be D'Avaux,² whose lifetime fell a full century later. Many suggestions were made, few of which are worth recording. At about the date of Woltmann's work (1872) it was accepted that the left-hand figure was Sir Thomas Wyatt the poet, and it then became necessary to supply a plausible name for his friend, Woltmann suggesting that of John Leland the antiquary. Mr. Sidney Colvin³ at a later date made the happy suggestion that the left-hand figure was Jean de Dinteville, Bailly de Troyes. Meanwhile Mr. W. F. Dickes wrote several articles⁴ and a monograph, in which he sought to prove, with great ingenuity, that the two persons were not ambassadors, nor Frenchmen, but the two German counts-palatine, Otto Henry and Philipp, who represented the two sides of the religious treaty of Nuremberg of 1532. Other suggestions had also been made, and the question had become a standing puzzle, even for many whose interest in the art of Holbein was of the slightest. At this juncture Miss Mary F. S. Hervey made a discovery which seemed finally to set the question at rest. In the year 1895 Miss Hervey's attention was drawn to a notice in the "*Revue de Champagne et de Brie*," which mentioned that a certain bookseller, M. Saffroy of Pré-Saint-Gervais, had on his sale list a seventeenth-century parchment describing a picture by Holbein preserved at that date at Polisy and representing Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve. So little interest had the matter aroused, that when Miss Hervey applied to

¹ See National Gallery Catalogue. To avoid the necessity of a full description in the text I will merely refer the reader to the extract from that catalogue in the Appendix, which should be compared with the reproduction of the picture.

² The first bearer of the title of D'Avaux died in 1650. It seems probable that the name D'Avaux recklessly inserted in the Beaujon catalogue may have grown out of the misreading of an ill-written de Lavaur. M. de Selve Ev: de Lavaur becoming M. de Selve et D'Avaux.

³ "Times," September, 1890; "Art Journal," 1891.

⁴ "Athenæum," January 25, 1896; "Magazine of Art," 1901.



The Ambassadors
National Gallery London

Saffroy the parchment was found to be still unsold. Its authenticity as a seventeenth-century document was vouched for by the experts of the British Museum. The parchment is now preserved in the National Gallery, to which gallery it was presented by Miss Hervey. It states that the two persons represented are, on the left of the picture, Jean de Dinteville, Bailly de Troyes, who was in London as French ambassador during the great part of the year 1533; while the younger man on the right is his friend George de Selve, who a year later was consecrated Bishop of Lavaur, and had paid a visit to Dinteville in London in 1533. Corroboration was found in another original memorandum still preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut at Paris. Miss Hervey at once made her discovery known, and in the year 1900 embodied her information on the subject in a well-known monograph.¹

The solution appeared to have been reached, and the last word to have been spoken. But Mr. W. F. Dickes once more mustered his forces, and finally in the year 1903 issued his book,² in which he once more identifies the two persons in the picture as the counts-palatine of the Rhine, Otto Henry and his brother Philipp. He sets aside the evidence of the parchment slip as a seventeenth-century fabrication, probably by the hand which, in his view, added the name "Polizy" to the Nuremberg globe which we see in the picture. So far for the demolition of his opponent's position. His own view he supports by a very careful and intricate analysis of the setting and arrangement of the various astronomical instruments in the picture itself. According to his reading of these, they point to the exact year, month, day, and even the hour of birth of the two individuals, the one (Otto Henry) having been born on the 10th of April, 1502, at 10.33 p.m., and the other (Philipp) on November 12th, 1503, at 5 a.m. Both these dates he declares to be accurately set forth to the very hour by the evidence of the instruments.

The reader will at once recognize the fact that a controversy which has already exhausted many isolated magazine articles, and has further called forth an entire volume on either side, could not be investigated in this book save at such length as would make the sacrifice of more important matter inevitable. I must frankly admit myself incapable of testing the astronomical accuracy of Mr. Dickes' deductions. I must be content to have stated the general conclusion of either side of the controversy, and for the details of their respective arguments must refer my readers to the books already mentioned. On the one side we have the documentary evidence produced by Miss Hervey; upon the other side we have Mr. W. F. Dickes' interpretation of the instruments, which, if his reading be right, points to the birth-dates of his two counts. It is a question of the value

¹ "Holbein's Ambassadors," Mary F. S. Hervey. G. Bell and Sons. 1900.

² "Holbein's Ambassadors unriddled." Cassell and Co. 1903.

of the evidence on one side or the other. I may not for my own part avoid the responsibility of expressing an opinion, and in saying that I adopt Miss Hervey's view that the two persons are Frenchmen and not Germans, and that they do represent Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve, I by no means ignore the importance of Mr. Dickes' contribution to the question.

But whichever identification we prefer, we are able to say with certainty, for the circumstances in this point fit either pair equally well, that Holbein found himself face to face with an occasion which was full of inspiration for him, and called out from him his highest and most willingly given effort. These were men of intellectual attainment and of cultivated interests. The wonderful array of scientific instruments which the picture contains, whatever may have been its use in pointing to a birthday, certainly gave to Holbein the justifiable opportunity for indulging his own taste in the exact rendering of these objects. As we saw to be the case, therefore, in the office equipments of "George Gyze," so here these accompaniments became part and parcel of the lives and occupations of the men themselves, an essential part, in fact, of the portraits themselves, and the reality with which they are painted becomes an element in the reality of the men.

It is possible to find amongst Holbein's portraits, as, for example, in the "George Gyze" and in the "Sieur de Morette," presently to be mentioned, surface of a more exquisite quality and more fascinating presentments of character. The panel is of very large size, and hardly admits of the jewel-like treatment which we find in the technique of some of his smaller panels. The men, too, were grave men, of thoughtful character and tastes, as one might divine from one glance at their faces, even if other evidence were absent, and did not lend themselves to bright and sparkling treatment. Nowhere, indeed, throughout the whole range of his portraits, do we ever find Holbein sacrificing the least element of character to any desire to exhibit a triumph of technical dexterity, or to fascinate where it is his mere duty to record. He paints you a picture of grave and learned men—and there is over it all an air of gravity—part of the essential truth of the picture, conveyed to you by the whole feeling of the work. Holbein's greatness shows itself at its greatest often in the self-restraint, the reticence, the complete absence of all self-consciousness, all display of self. There is no brilliant legerdemain, no astonishing passage of rapid technique. He loses himself absolutely in his subject. You do not think of him at all till you have finished thinking of his picture. Even then it all seems so to have come of itself, all to be there as it is because it could not have been there in any other way, that you are in danger of forgetting the power of this man, which shows itself as much in his reserve as many another man's power is shown in its display. Stand for half an hour before "The



Duch de Berry, 1543
Windsor Castle

Ambassadors" of Holbein and you may find yourself thinking of everything except the painter.

The colour of the picture is grave and solemn, standing somewhat apart from the comparative gaiety of the "George Gyze" and from the rich brilliancy of the "Sieur de Morette." The blacks and the reds of Court wear in that day were, as we have already urged, colours that required to be subdued into accord rather than hues which offered to the artist a ready-made feast of harmonies. In this case the colour problem was made more difficult than usual by the sad-coloured robe of purple with which one of them is clothed. A rich table-rug, somewhat of the pattern of the rug in the Dresden edition of the "Meier Madonna," reads like a doubtful expedient for bringing together the colour scheme of the picture, especially when it is added that the curtain in the background is of a rich green damask. But the whole has been brought together into a harmony of low tone but of much grave richness, while light has been brought into the picture with a force which at first escapes you, because it is so little assertive, in the white fur of the "ambassador's" cape, the gold of his Order of St. Michael and of his dagger, and also in the details of the instruments which lie on the table between the two figures. Of the rendering of these same instruments it is only necessary to say that they touch the highest possible level of attainment in that direction. Their realism is obtained by no feat of dexterity, but by a self-restrained process aiming at perfection. You cannot, as in the case of some brilliant *tour de force* by Frans Hals or by Velazquez step aside to ask yourself and to see how it is done. You ask no such questions as you stand before a Holbein. Your mind hardly troubles itself to ask how it is done. It is there: and it is there so naturally that it hardly occurs to you to wonder how it got there.

The curious object which lies between the two men is pronounced to be a human skull painted in a distorted fishlike shape, which assumes the true appearance of a skull when seen by a person standing at a particular angle to the picture.¹ The insertion of this curious optical illusion reminds one of the tricks of fancy which are recorded in the chapter on the wall paintings of Holbein. But such a feature is here introduced, no doubt, with a good reason, having regard to the tastes of the two men for whom the portrait was painted and to whom this object lesson in scientific optics would be a lasting interest, as well as a perpetual hallmark to remind those

¹ Mr. W. F. Dickes sees in this human skull presented with its shadow in this fishlike shape a double, or even multiple allusion, first to the fish, the emblem of Bavaria; again, in special reference to Philipp, "the sign of whose father's house was a fish"; again, in reference to the theory of Apian, Philipp's friend, concerning comets, "that the heads of comets are tangible solids, and their tails as it were the shadows of their heads." Lastly, he believes the skull to be, beyond its intention as a *memento mori*, a direct reference to the story of the Empress Adelaide and Otto the Great (A.D. 952), ancestors of Counts Otto and Philipp.

who came after of their pursuits and studies: to this use of it must be added, of course, its very obvious purpose as a *memento mori*.

It will be convenient at this point to consider another portrait by Holbein, which, though it was probably painted several years later, represents another ambassador of France, who in the year 1534 succeeded de Dinteville in London, on the return of the latter to his own country. This was Charles Solier, "Sieur de Morette," whose portrait has hung for a long time in the same room as the Dresden edition of the "Meier Madonna" under the name of Hubert Morett, jeweller to Henry VIII. At an earlier stage of its existence it was for many years described as a portrait of Ludovico Sforza by Leonardo da Vinci. In the year 1860 the original drawing was purchased by the Dresden Gallery from a London dealer, and hangs close by the oil painting in the same room. It is only recently that the official catalogue has recognized the portrait as that of the "Sieur de Morette."

Whatever has been said of the stimulus which Holbein was likely to have felt in painting the "Ambassadors" of the National Gallery may obviously be applied with equal force to this portrait at Dresden. Holbein has given us in the "Sieur de Morette" of the Dresden Gallery a portrait which combines in their highest manifestation all the qualities which are most characteristic of his art. As an expression of individual character, as a presentment of a real living being as he looked and spoke and thought and was, portraiture can go no further. As a piece of technical achievement one may go to the painters in whom achievement shows, by all consent, at its very highest, and you will turn away again with the assurance that Holbein has nothing to fear by the comparison. As a piece of delicious surface—we have very frequently to refer to that purely technical feature of Holbein's practice—a piece of texture delightful to the eye apart from all mental and aesthetic messages which painting has to convey, nothing more delicate, more brilliant, and more exquisite came from the master's hand. The picture is noticeable for a quality which belongs indeed to other of Holbein's portraits, but to none in so high a degree as to this. You may view it near or far, up to the very limit at which it begins to be no longer recognizable to the sight, and it is equally at any distance a portrait of a man and at no distance an incoherent piece of paint. There are men, Frans Hals is a good example, much of whose work can only be seen properly at a distance of some fourteen feet, though it is often superb when so seen. There are others, again, as for example some of the more minute of the early Flemings and of the early Italians, whose work can only be properly seen at a distance of a few feet and becomes a mere mass of indistinguishable but lovely jewellery at thrice the distance. But with this portrait of Morette,¹

¹ It is interesting to note that Mr. Dickes claims this portrait as that of Count Otto at a later age, and attributes it to Christopher Amberger.



Charles Solier, Sieur de Morette
The Zwinger, Dresden

J. M. H. H. H. H. H.

as with some others of Holbein's, you may view it standing a foot or two away, you may even, in spite of Rembrandt's caution, go near enough to smell it if you will, but there is no point of nearness at which you find yourself driven back and commanded to keep your length; and if you retire to the extreme distance at which the shape of the rooms allows you to hold sight of it, you merely suffer the same loss of unimportant minutiae that you suffer in retiring to a like distance from a living face that you know. Holbein of course does not stand alone here—one might mention the "Doge Loredano" of Gian Bellini in our National Gallery, and Jan Van Eyck's portrait of a man at Berlin, as parallel instances amongst many others. But in realistic force and largeness and strength of technique, this example by Holbein stands so far beyond those of the other two painters, that one might fairly expect it to say to one at some point: "Thus far shalt thou come and no further." There is no reasonable point of distance at which the portrait of Morette becomes either unimpressive, or over-minute, or incoherent.

Again, in examining minutely the technical methods of Holbein in this great portrait, which represents the high-water mark of his art, we are brought to the observation of a very interesting fact for which I prepared the reader in the chapter on the earliest pictures of his boyhood at Basel. Those pictures show in all cases a visible outline, sometimes of considerable thickness and of a different colour, commonly some not very visible tone of brown which surrounds objects even though seen against light. And this usage Holbein never wholly abandoned to the very last, though he greatly modified it, employing in the portraits of his later period, and in the example which we are now considering, a very thin line, sometimes almost imperceptible, but never wholly absent. In this respect he looks backwards to the primitives, to the early Flemings, who were his lineal ancestors in technique. He never, even in latest days—his life was but a short one of forty-five years; it is impossible to say what developments his art might have reached if he had been allowed the span of a Titian or a Hals—arrived at the practice of Velazquez, of Hals aforesaid, of Rubens or Van Dyck, or of the great Venetians by whom the detachment of object from object is expressed by no primitive expedient of a bounding line, but by the impact of light and shade, by juxtapositions of colour, and by the true adjustment of relative values. It becomes, indeed, very interesting to glance for a moment at the methods of various early schools and individual masters with regard to the use of an outline more or less decided. It will be found that the primitive Flemings and the primitive Germans employ it to a man, and many, but not all, of the primitive Italians. Botticelli uses it frankly, and so, too, does Mantegna—both of them, be it observed, engravers. And it is natural to suppose that the use of the line would seem more inevitable

to one who was trained to its use in engraving, or who, like Holbein, drew largely for engravers, and they would discard it from their work in colour with greater difficulty than those who approached their painting without the conventional habit upon them. Certain it is, however, that Holbein uses this convention, though in a very modified form, even in a work of such convincing and vivid reality as the portrait of the *Sieur de Morette*.¹

This question of a line or no line is both interesting and amusing. No one needs to be told that there is no outline in nature, and it is very simple, therefore, to argue that a Hals or a Van Dyck is right and a Holbein necessarily wrong. But Art is wholly a mental acceptance of visible facts presented to it in a form with which it is either traditionally familiar (convention), or which it can interpret to itself by sympathy and quick conjecture. Reality is absolutely out of reach of either method, and experience shows us that the nearer the artist pushes his work, by any contrivances which may be open to him, to the verge of illusion, the more surely does Art cease to send any message to us which is worth our receiving, or to tell us anything beyond the merest external facts of our surroundings which we can see for ourselves in our most commonplace outlook upon life. Therefore the man who can give you his particular message in the way which best suits his message is the man after all who has given you the best art. One man gives you his "*Sieur de Morette*" with a line round his face and his hand which we know were never around them, yet he has indeed given you the *Sieur de Morette*—another has given you his "*Saskia*" with the golden hair losing itself in the golden background so that you cannot tell one from the other, but he too has given us his *Saskia*.

And the problems of light and shade and colour, with all their loveliness and all their surpassing charm, were confessedly not for Holbein, nor indeed as yet for any of his time and country. A hundred years had yet to pass before there should be men in Holland, in Belgium, and in Spain, who had begun to see them or had even gone far in seeing them. Meanwhile let Holbein tell his beautiful story in his own beautiful way, and thank him for what he gives us. He is not Velazquez, nor Rubens, nor Rembrandt. If he were any of these he would not be Holbein, and we should be the poorer by one great original artist.

¹ It is interesting to observe that the copyist who executed the edition of the "*Meier Madonna*" at Dresden had failed to observe this trait in one or two portions of his work.



*Robert Cheseman of Dormanswell. 1533.
The Hague*

CHAPTER XVII

THOMAS CROMWELL AND OTHER PORTRAITS

FROM 1534 TO 1536

THE first two years of Holbein's sojourn near his countrymen of the Steelyard had brought him, as we have seen, few sitters beyond the worthy but not extremely interesting German merchants. The year 1533, with its triumphal arch, and with its picture of the English gentleman Robert Cheseman, and the French ambassador de Dinteville, begins to show an enlargement of his circle, while in the year 1534 we find the name of Thomas Cromwell, who as yet held no higher office about the Court than as Keeper of the King's Jewel House, but who already was employed by the king, or say rather who employed himself, on an infinite number of important tasks, and who was already shaping the policy of Henry towards those ends which have earned for the next ten years of England the not unsuitable name of The English Terror. It was not, however, through any Court connection probably that Holbein obtained this commission, but rather by the fact of his constant presence at the Steelyard. For Cromwell had his hand deep in many ventures, public and private, political and commercial. He had himself served, at Middelburg in Holland, an apprenticeship to German commerce, and had still large interests in the wool-trade, of whose export the Hanseatic Company possessed a monopoly. He spoke German easily, and there can be little doubt that he who, as it was said a year or two later, kept hired spies in the households of every great nobleman in England, had, in the furtherance of that great scheme of a political Protestant combination of the German princes of Europe, which failed of success at the last perhaps only because of the failure of Henry to take to Anne of Cleves, found good use for the services as trusty messengers of many an one among the German merchants who from time to time were to be found at the Steelyard. Here Cromwell saw the portraits of Gyze, the vice-alderman of the Guild, of Hans of Antwerp, with whom as Keeper of the Jewels he must have had often dealings, and here he must have met with the young German whom in a later year he was perhaps to help on to his office as Royal Painter. For many years, probably since the day when the transfer of the great series of Holbein drawings took place from the Earl of Pembroke to the Earl of Arundel, a drawing, which seems to have been left behind, has

hung in Wilton House, with the name printed at the bottom in Indian ink, "the Lord Cromwell. Holbein." Why it should have remained behind, being indeed one of the very finest pieces of handiwork that Holbein ever accomplished, is not at first sight apparent. I make the suggestion that the Earl of Arundel, being one of the firmest of English adherents to the Catholic cause, had no desire to possess the portrait, as it was then accepted, of the man whose very name was loathed by the Catholics of England. That may possibly explain its isolation from the rest of the series, but it does not, of course, throw any light upon the original accuracy of the naming of this most masterly drawing. Mr. Lionel Cust,¹ than whom there can be no better authority on the authenticity of any English portrait, says that this drawing does not represent Thomas Cromwell, for whose likeness we must look to the much-repainted oil portrait at Tittenhanger, which has been seen in the Winter Exhibitions of Old Masters at Burlington House. Mr. Cust does not give his reasons, which are, however, doubtless ample, for the decision. One can only regret that it could not have been given in the other direction, since we have to abandon reluctantly a most powerful and characteristic drawing for a painting which has now lost much both of its power and its character.

Thomas Cromwell, the son of a Putney blacksmith, was beyond all question one of the most capable as well as one of the most masterful and most determined politicians who ever shaped the destinies of a country. No man perhaps ever had a wider knowledge of his fellow-men for better or for worse, too often for worse, than he who had been most things, from the bellows-boy of a forge to the chief minister of a kingdom. He had spent most of his youth in Italy, a soldier and a ruffian to begin with, as he himself declared—they were much the same thing in Italy in those days—afterwards an accountant in a merchant's house in Venice. Then he appears a trader of varying fortunes, at one time in a position to borrow money of the banker Frescobaldi, though not in a position to repay for many a long year, when, to his credit, he is said to have done it in the hour of Frescobaldi's need with liberal usury. Then he drifts nearer to home, and is a thriving wool-merchant at Middelburg. And when he slowly rises into influence in a very different sphere at home as Wolsey's secretary and sharer of all his secret policy, we find him a man of many parts, of great accomplishment, of liberal tastes, and, above all, of a clear-sighted fearless outlook, and of a determination which had years and years before in his Italian days forgotten the very meaning of the word scruple. For he had come under the spell of Machiavelli, and saw in the unshrinking logic of that strangely honest advocate of thoroughness to wavering princes who were spoiling their chances of success by still clinging intermittently

¹ See article in "Dictionary of National Biography"—Holbein.

to the laws of God, an ideal which, to a man of Cromwell's shrewd intellect, had at least the merit of consistency. He was familiar with the doctrines of "Il Principe" some years before it was printed, as we know by his advice to Cardinal Pole, and he had probably possessed it in manuscript since his young days as "a ruffian" in Italy—which was still the Italy of Caesar Borgia, Machiavelli's hero. Questionless is it that, as he found his power apparently grow, after Wolsey's fall, year by year with Henry, and as he saw the nobles whom he hated as much as they hated him, go down one after another under his silent catlike policy, the methods taught in "Il Principe" were applied by him to the destinies of England with as ruthless but as clear a purpose as ever they had been by the Borgias in their path to power. But Cromwell taught Henry—who was always willing to be marshalled the way he wished to go, but in no other direction—the method of sweeping clear his path by a process wiser than that which the Borgias had used at Sinigaglia, since he taught him how to make his parliament seem to be doing the work. And so things went forward, while the nobles called Cromwell low-born knave, and themselves went to the scaffold. Henry might actually curse him to his face and even strike him "twice or thrice of the week." But Cromwell kept his policy before him. It was he, beyond question, who had suggested to Henry at the first the method of cutting the Gordian knot, when the Pope refused the divorce, by making himself supreme head of the Church, so that, pope or no pope, it should be treason in any English subject to deny the divorce. It was he who wrote gaily in his diary, "Item, when it shall please the king that Master More go to his execution?" and "Item, the Abbot of Glastonbury to be tried and executed at Reading." It was he who devised the abolition of the greater monasteries and made the nobles parties to the act by handing over part of the spoil to them—much of it, he knew, would come back again by the process of confiscation after executions for treason presently. It was at his knees that the wretched Anne Boleyn fell imploring mercy—he stood by her scaffold a short week after. Fate moved her successor in a little over a year, and the road seemed open now for that great stroke of policy by which he was to unite the throne of Henry with the Protestant princes of Germany and complete the fabric which he was building. The keystone of that building was to be Anne of Cleves. But though Cromwell was steeped in the doctrines of Machiavelli, he had forgotten, or had not taken to heart the lesson of that one chapter wherein the writer, whose sentences are fairly aglow with admiration for the masterly policy of Alexander and of Caesar Borgia, yet utters the warning that even such "virtu" as these men possessed may be all rendered futile if Fortune turn her back upon them.

He would have done well, too, to have remembered the fate of Remiro

d'Orco, Caesar's lieutenant, whom Caesar had used as his implement in the Marches of Romagna to carry out his ferocious purposes, and whose body, when he had no further use for the man, he caused to be exhibited one morning in the market-place of Cesena with a bloody knife on the block beside him. Fortune turned her back on Cromwell at that very moment when Anne of Cleves first turned her face upon Henry in the celebrated interview at Greenwich. He had played the perilous game of trying to shape Henry to a policy. There was no man who brooked such handling less than Henry when once he had perceived it, and there were few men who were shrewder to perceive it than he, however little he might seem to be observing. Cromwell had calculated well in many things, marvellously well in some, but there was one thing which neither he nor any other of his day, unless perhaps it was More, who had counted the cost of honesty and was ready to pay it, had rightly estimated, and that was the character of the master whom he believed all the while to be his pupil. It served Henry's purpose well to have Cromwell for his lieutenant, a Remiro d'Orco on whose shoulders he might rest the odium of his policy, and whom he would one day show in two pieces to the people of England as soon as he had done with him. That time had now come. Even after the failure of the marriage scheme with Anne of Cleves there was nothing immediately to warn Cromwell of the coming storm. The marriage took place in January, 1540. In April, Baron Cromwell of Oakham became Earl of Essex. Then the stroke fell swiftly and surely. On June 10th of that year, when he entered the council chamber, Norfolk, his old enemy, rose, and without a word of warning arrested him on a charge of high treason. That mean-minded timeserver, sitting as Lord High Steward of the Council, was not above the cowardly brutality of tearing the chain of office ferociously from his fallen rival's neck, while William Fitzwilliam, Earl of Southampton, who had been known as a friend of Cromwell, had to content himself with plucking the Order of the Garter from his breast, in token of the value of his friendship. The latter, Southampton, is the man whom Froude in one of his most eloquent moods of special pleading finds it possible to describe as the "Nelson of his time." Both he and Norfolk were, as we shall presently see, sitters to Holbein. For the moment it is enough to say that there was little that was heroic or chivalrous in either of them. They showed nearest to their true colour on this occasion. There was more of dignity on that day in the figure of the ruined minister as he stood alone and faced his enemies: "I call you to witness have I played the traitor?" "Make a quick end, my lords," he added, and fiercely flung his cap upon the ground. He died by the weapons he had forged. It was under his régime that a few foolish words, tortured to a treasonable meaning, had led loyal Englishmen to the block. It was some empty utterances of his own that were

THOMAS CROMWELL(?)

WILTON HOUSE



used against him now. He had passed the atrocious statute by which a person attainted could be condemned unheard. And he was destined to be the first and only Englishman who died without a hearing. Even his last prayer, "Make a quick end," was not listened to. A few days generally sufficed in that reign, even in a case of so much difficulty as the guilt of Anne Boleyn. Cromwell was left seven weeks in prison, while it was under debate if he should be burnt as a heretic or die by the halter or the axe. Henry used the same kind of mercy to him which had touched the humour of Sir Thomas More, and gave him the privilege of dying by the axe—used, it is said, in clumsy and butcherly fashion—in the July of that year.

This was the man whom Holbein painted in the year 1534. As we look at the drawing of Wilton House and the painting of Tittenhanger, once more we feel that the former answers best to our conception of the man. For in private life it is on record that Cromwell was genial and full of humour, kindly and accessible, and his outward mien, just as in the case of others, such as Caesar Borgia himself, Catherine dei Medici, and a few more whose names call up ill memories, showed no traces of cruel purpose, still less of truculence, but was pleasant to look upon and even fascinating. The drawing at Wilton House seems to give us something of all this. It is the very determined, very self-possessed face of one who has known all sorts and conditions of men in all sorts of circumstances, and it has in it that half-grim half-contemptuous air of *bonhomme* which is said to have belonged to this disciple of Machiavelli. The dry and dusty wrinkles round the eyes seem half within and half without and full of knowledge of the world. And on the other hand we can fancy such a face belonging to the man who could set down in cool and businesslike fashion from day to day the entries which make our blood run cold. Turn from this superb drawing to the oil painting of Tittenhanger, and we find ourselves looking at a face which might have belonged to a narrow-brained Spanish inquisitor. The heavy bloodless face, the small close-set eyes, the low narrow forehead, the sinister expression make up a picture which the worst enemy of Cromwell's name could not well improve upon. But the power, the clear-sightedness, the courage, the intellect of the man are absent from it. Even when the largest allowances are made for the loss which it has suffered from repaintings one can only turn away from it with a sense of disappointment.

It was not, however, through Cromwell that Holbein obtained his entry to the Court. For a whole year, indeed, after the portrait must have been finished, namely, through 1534 and well into 1535, his list of sitters shows the names only of English gentlemen who were happy in that they made no part of history. Such were Reskymeer, the light-haired Cornishman whose portrait hangs at Hampton Court, while the drawing for

it rests at Windsor; Simon George, another Cornishman, whose portrait is in the Stadel Institute at Frankfurt; John Pointz, whose portrait, a noble drawing, is at Windsor; to be followed, however, a little later by several which show that his circle was again enlarging and began to include some who belonged to the Court. Thus we find in the Windsor series, Nicholas Bourbon, the French ambassador and poet; Lady Audley—a very lovely drawing—the wife of that Lord Audley, builder of Audley End, who, though he was not himself a man of great force or acumen, was fated to have a share in more important state trials for treason than has ever fallen to the lot of any other English lawyer—Fisher, More, Cromwell, Catherine Howard, and many others, all receiving their sentence from his mouth. Holbein's miniature of this same lady is also at Windsor. To the year 1535 belongs also the Windsor drawing of the Duchess of Suffolk, fourth wife of Charles Brandon, of whose little son, Henry Brandon, Holbein made at about the same time the charming miniature, also at Windsor. It is said that Holbein learnt the art of miniature painting from Lucas Hornebolt,¹ the Court painter, who, with his sister Susanna, praised for this art by Dürer, enjoyed no small practice. But Holbein had little need to learn from anyone else. Already he had, as we have seen, executed work on a very small scale, as for instance the medallion portrait of Erasmus, and the Derich Born at Munich, which are little more than enlarged miniatures. All that Holbein had to learn from a man like Hornebolt was, at most, some practical details as to material. It was a branch of art in which Holbein was peculiarly fitted to excel. His sense of largeness, even when he worked on the smallest scale, and the exquisite skill of his craftsmanship, make the little set of miniatures which are preserved at Windsor no less desirable as portraits and as completely expressive of character as his full-sized pictures. There is, in fact, no dividing line at any point in Holbein's art through all the stages from his smallest miniature to his largest panels. The tiny miniature of little Henry Brandon is as large in style as the portrait of the Ambassadors; his portrait of the Ambassadors is as consummate in execution as his smallest miniature.

¹ The name is spelt in many different ways, Hornebaud, Horebout, etc., etc. I have adopted the Anglicized version in common use in his own day.



Henry VIII
After a lost original by Holbein, Windsor Castle

CHAPTER XVIII

THE KING'S PAINTER (1536). HENRY AND HIS QUEENS. EDWARD PRINCE OF WALES

WE have distinct internal evidence from the pictures which came from Holbein's hand in 1536 that he was already employed about the Court, although there is no entry before 1538 in the Household expenses of any payment made to him officially. And it is therefore probable that during the years 1536 and 1537 he had not received any formal appointment, accompanied by a salary, as Court painter, but that he was merely receiving payment for each portrait as he painted it. Seeing that his work had now been known here and there to men of position in England for full ten years, seeing also how incomparably superior even as mere likeness, apart from any other quality of art, his work showed itself to that of any other artist in the country, it seems strange that his recognition by the Court should have been so long deferred. It cannot be said that the competition which he had to face was severe. The sergeant-painter of the moment, Antonio Toto, an Italian, was well suited to the odd jobs, the painting of flags, the decoration of furniture, the dressing of the tables for a feast, which were absolutely included in the artistic duties of an English Court painter. Lucas Hornebolt of Ghent indeed had a somewhat higher title to respect than Toto, and that he remained, even after Holbein's great achievements, in higher estimation, is proved by the fact that his salary always exceeded by some pounds that of Holbein himself, which, so far as can be ascertained, never rose above £30 a year. The taste of England at that period was probably as little instructed as that of any country in Europe. Henry indeed is said to have had a love of art and to have prized his own collection of pictures so highly that he never allowed the key of it to pass from his own possession. But in the light of his account-books we may be allowed to doubt if his connoisseurship was of a very high order. And it is evident that the taste of his Court did not rise above the standard of its master. Portrait is often understood and enjoyed even by men who have no intrinsic liking for art, and it is noticeable that scarcely an instance can be found during the whole of Holbein's English period in which he received a commission from an English source for any form of picture, save portraits only. The days of the "Meier Madonna" had passed away from him for ever

—not from his hopes, however, for he still cherished the dream of returning to his own country to paint once more with a freer hand the subjects of his heart.

Henry VIII.'s well-known love of personal display, and his pride in his personal appearance, would naturally lead us to suppose that he would have given many sittings to such a painter as Holbein. George IV. is said to have given over sixty to poor Lawrence for his legs alone, which he greatly admired, but Henry, certainly no less vain, seems for some reason to have had little fancy for the process, and though the country houses of England are well supplied with copies of Henry after Holbein, extremely few undoubted originals from the master's hand exist in any shape. And one only, the wonderful drawing at Munich, can be said with certainty to be the result of a sitting from the king. That there were other studies—certainly one for the full-length portrait of the great Whitehall group—we feel pretty sure. But the absence of all such studies at the present day, beyond the Munich example, shows that they must have been but few. We may, however, regret this the less since there have survived to us that consummate sketch, and also the great cartoon in black and white at Hardwick Hall, which Holbein used to transfer a portion of his picture to the wall of Whitehall. The Munich drawing is of the head only, in coloured chalk on paper prepared with body colour in his usual manner, the modelling produced by the simplest possible means with rubbings of reddish chalk upon the grained surface. The subtlety of this modelling is such that it wholly eludes the power of reproduction, and is apt to become through photography a dark and solid mass. The drawing itself can alone give its own astonishing effect, and I am hardly using the language of exaggeration when I say that he who has stood long before that drawing will feel for the rest of his life that he has stood before and seen Henry VIII., and he will carry the image in his mind for all his days. The bony structure of the skull, which is clearly indicated, shows that it was not really a large head, the eyes, whose position of course in a face remain unalterable no matter how much the face becomes loaded with fat, seeming close together and small merely because of the great expanse of added flesh upon the cheeks, which droop in heavy and flaccid folds below the level of the small round apple-shaped chin. The mouth, again, seems small for the same reason, but is firm and full of self-will. The eyes are absolutely without any definable expression save that same almost appalling expression of "self," which seems in some mysterious sphinx-like fashion to creep about the whole face. There is no character in history so difficult to fathom—none around which so fierce a battle has raged, and always will rage, as that of Henry VIII. Men have interpreted it into many very different shapes, and viewed it from strangely different points of view. Opinions

HENRY VIII
MUNICH PRINT CABINET



about him have ranged from that which would make him wholly sensualist to that which would make him half a saint. Men have not yet decided whether he was one of the most secret and inscrutable diplomatists who ever handled men, or whether he was himself handled by men and circumstance. To one historian he is a callous despot carrying out his own wishes with all the instincts of an animal, to another he is a conscientious sovereign sore beset and much perplexed, whom fate and a sense of responsibility drove into ugly necessities. These are not the pages in which all or any of these views can fitly be discussed. But they are eminently the pages in which Holbein's interpretation must be recorded. The word interpretation is indeed hardly the word to use. He does not interpret, he simply sees. He does not approach this or any other subject from the point of view of preconceived opinion or *parti pris*. He comes to it in that spirit of simple penetrating candour which is as unerring in Holbein as the skill of hand with which he sets down what he has seen. He rather makes the face tell you its own tale than makes it tell you what he sees in it. It is Holbein's contribution to history, a priceless historical document indeed, the record left to us by a man who took no sides and knew no parties, and who simply says to us, "This is Henry VIII. I saw him and I drew him."

It is a face which can only be summed by the one word "self"—written large. There is no other characteristic nor quality which one could extract from that impenetrable face, if we should honestly trust to the evidence of the picture only, and not call in anything of what we know from other sources. None of the qualities which biographers assign to him both for better and worse can be read out of that immovable, stolid, expressionless countenance. Neither intellect, nor humour, nor even temper flashes from those fixed and lightless eyes. You may look for sensuality and cruelty in it, and you will only find them because you have expected them to be there. It is a face in which "self" seems to have absolutely absorbed all the characteristics both of the virtues and the vices, leaving us a face which is as much a riddle to us as the man's own character has always been and will ever be. There is a strange and terrible fascination in looking into that face just as Holbein saw it that day. It is the living mask of the selfish, lonely, masterful spirit whom no one ever really loved, and whom few dared ever disobey.

The face in the Duke of Devonshire's great cartoon is less expressive and less complete, for the very obvious reason that that cartoon was not originally meant to stand as an independent work of art, but was used as a means of transferring Holbein's design to the walls of Whitehall Palace, where it perished in the fire of 1697. And nothing more was needed in such a cartoon beyond the leading lines of the composition, the details of expres-

sion being reserved for the final wall painting. The cartoon was one of the chief features in the Tudor Exhibition in London of 1890, and a small copy of the completed wall painting, which Charles II. had happily caused to be made by Remigius van Leemput, now hanging at Hampton Court, enables us to say that this surviving portion of the cartoon shows the left-hand half of the great picture which represented Henry VII. and Henry VIII. on the one side, with Elizabeth of York (the king's mother) and Jane Seymour on the other side. The king stands on a low raised dais against an architectural background. The pin pricks which are seen along the outlines in the cartoon show that it was used for transferring the design to the prepared wall by means of "pouncing."

If the attribute which we saw in the Munich drawing is comparatively absent from the face of Henry VIII. in this cartoon, it is more than expressed in the superbly arrogant poise and attitude of the whole figure, which may fairly be claimed as one of the most direct and masterly pieces of characteristic portraiture which any artist has ever attained by such simple means. Self-effacement has not as yet, so far as I know, been one of the virtues which have been claimed on behalf of Henry by any of his biographers, but when, under one of those changes which historical opinion is wont to undergo, this claim shall at length come to be advanced, I would suggest as a corrective to that view one single glance at this living presentment by Holbein of the man who, as was admitted by those who admired him least, looked always like a man and a king. If, indeed, we were to accept all that was written of him while he was still alive to read, we should have to see in him such an admirable Crichton both outwardly and inwardly as the world has at no other time beheld. We may well smile, as Christina of Denmark is said to have smiled, at these catalogues of excellence. But when we have made fair deductions, there is still evidence that Henry VIII. was in his youth and manhood a fine specimen of a healthy and athletic Englishman, who took his part and held his own in all the sports and exercises, from a tourney to a tennis match, in which English gentlemen of his day delighted. The figure of the man which Holbein has left to us, in the year 1537, when Henry was forty-six years old, quite gives us this impression. The figure is strong, firmly set upon its feet, and elastic, and by no means ungainly, ponderous, or coarse. Holbein saw in Henry, and he gives what he saw as candidly as he gave what he saw in his face, a kingly and a manly figure.

Once more, as in the case of the wall paintings of Basel and the decorations of the Steelyard, we find ourselves vainly deploring the loss of a painting which would have enabled us to compare Holbein's work on fair terms with the wall paintings of the great Italians. Fate bore a strange grudge against Holbein. The circumstances and the shortness of his life



*Henry viii and Henry vii. cartoon.
Duke of Devonshire.*

limited his achievements of this kind to a very few examples, and mischance has in every case removed these few. Pepys saw this picture a few years before its destruction. He leaves us a description of a visit to Whitehall, in which by the way he makes the apparent mistake of believing that the ceiling also had been painted by Holbein. He is provokingly silent on the points on which we would willingly have heard him gossip, and neither he nor anyone else has left us a detailed description of a picture which, on the mere evidence of the fragment of the cartoon, we are prepared to call a masterpiece.

I have already spoken of the scarcity of genuine pictures of Henry VIII. from the hand of Holbein. Copies by other hands which may evidently be referred to some common original by Holbein, and can in some instances be traced to the figure in this Whitehall group, are plentiful enough. A fine acknowledged copy, for example, exists at Windsor, and many panels of varying merit with claims of varying plausibility in private collections carry the name of Holbein. Mr. Lionel Cust accepts the genuineness of the little square panel at Althorp. But when all claims have been examined we find ourselves face to face with the fact that two only of all the representations of Henry VIII. have stood at all times undisputed as the work of Holbein, namely, the Munich drawing and the Hardwick Hall cartoon.

Of Henry's queens it is only natural that no portrait of Katharine of Aragon by Holbein should be found. She went to her rest in the January of 1536, the year which four months later was to see the fate of Anne Boleyn. And this, as we have seen, was the first year in which Holbein found employment about the Court. Whether he ever made any portrait of Anne Boleyn or no cannot be stated with absolute certainty, but it is, unfortunately, very improbable that he did so. She had borne a dead child on one of the last days of that sad January, and it was on the Mayday of that year that the Greenwich tournament with the episode of the dropped handkerchief occurred, to be followed nineteen days later by the scene on Tower Hill. The time between was short enough, and even if Holbein came to his Court work early enough in the year, it is hardly likely that the queen had sat to him. But amongst the drawings at Windsor is one of a lady of no very attractive appearance which has the superscription "Anne Boleyn" printed above it. We have already seen reason to suppose that the naming of these Windsor drawings was due to Sir John Cheke in the reign of Edward VI. Certainly, if we are right in that surmise, it may be said that Sir John Cheke should have made little mistake in the identity of one whose name in history was not writ in water but in blood, but the drawing is not accepted as representing Queen Anne Boleyn, nor does it correspond with the portrait by an inferior hand at Windsor which is recognized as that unhappy woman. The drawing certainly shows little

internal indication through the costume and headdress that it represents a queen. It is amongst the least adorned and most domestic of all the head-dresses in the Windsor collection. We are told that Anne Boleyn had little claim to beauty beyond her dark eyes and luxuriant hair, which, on public occasions, as at her coronation, she sometimes wore loose and flowing. The hair in this drawing is, of course, concealed within the close-fitting cap, but it is noticeable that the drawing is amongst the few at Windsor which show us a lady with dark eyes. Also we are told that the lower part of Anne Boleyn's face beneath the chin was swollen and enlarged, as if by an ulcer, and this feature is certainly conveyed by the drawing. It may, however, be that it was his memory of these very features which led the sponsor of the Windsor series to identify the portrait wrongly. The question must be left where the evidence leaves it, and we may without regret spare ourselves the close examination of a page which is the most sordid in English history. It is enough to say about the unhappy woman whom we may here be looking at, that as we read the evidence it is as incredible that she could have been guilty as that she could have been innocent. But whether Anne was guilty or innocent the portrait of her successor calls up historical facts which are beyond all dispute and scarcely less incredible.

For Jane Seymour, the queen whom Holbein painted so superbly, was being kept in readiness during those miserable days while her rival was waiting for death. On the morning when the signal gun from the Tower announced the death of Anne, Henry duly arrayed himself and paid his bridal visit to Jane Seymour. A few days were spent at the country house, and one week after Anne's execution the pair became man and wife. One would fain forget, if it were possible, this repulsive fact as we look at the portrait which Holbein painted probably a very few weeks or months later. The drawing is at Windsor, the finished picture at Vienna. Jane Seymour, we are told, was "but of moderate stature and of no great beauty," which as we look at the picture we can well believe. It is a quiet pale face with dark blue-gray eyes and no great charm of expression. The hair is entirely hidden under the elaborate headdress of the English fashion of the day. The mouth is small and somewhat grave and prim, and the ill-health which her son inherited is seen in the pallid hue of the cheeks and delicate look around the temples. The modelling, in a face which carried no strong characteristics, is produced by the most subtle and almost imperceptible modulations of tone. It could hardly have been a face which greatly inspired our artist, and one can almost see that Holbein flew, with a certain sense of relief, to the gorgeous yet modest richness of the queen's apparel. She wears a deep crimson bodice cut low and square at the front, whose upper sleeve is cloth of old gold, while the foresleeve is a brocade of gray silver.



Queen Jane Seymour 1537

QUEEN JANE SEYMOUR

WINDSOR CASTLE



The edging of her bodice is sewn with pearls and jewels, and at her throat hangs a jewel suspended by a necklace such as Holbein himself might have designed. The work is in every portion wrought with a perfection which is typical of Holbein, and yet with a breadth which pervades the whole portrait, and tells you that you are looking at a queen and not at a queen's millinery. Nevertheless Holbein's method in dealing with the said millinery should here be most carefully noted. It is difficult to find examples of his art which afford a better opportunity. If we look at the costume of one of Velazquez' *infantas*, or of such a picture as Rubens' "*Jacqueline van Caestre*" at Brussels, we are of course reminded that these two men, like most of the great later masters, obtained their splendid results by summarization and suggestion, by magical touches of the brush which make a chain, a jewel, a broiery flash out in superb reality from a masterly assemblage of incoherent paint-marks. That is their method and their result. Holbein produces his result by a wholly different method. If the embroidery of Jane Seymour's frilled cuff or the brocade of her foresleeve be examined, it will be found that the design is everywhere complete, unbroken, and continuous. You might trace with a point every thread of the pattern from its beginning to its end. A skilled weaver would gladly accept a piece cut out of one of Holbein's pictures as the pattern to hang above him at his work. And both methods, that of Velazquez and that of Holbein, are equally right, provided only that you have a Holbein or a Velazquez to hold the brush. In other hands you may get merely a niggling exactness which is as chilling as a pattern in a lady's fashion book, or you may get an empty and impertinent assumption of technical skill. Examples in both varieties may be found in most exhibitions of average size. If it be asked how it comes that the stitch for stitch exactness of Holbein in his "*Jane Seymour*" and his "*Anne of Cleves*" gives a result as broad and as satisfying as the incomparable suggestiveness of Velazquez, I believe the answer to be that the artistic instinct of the men, the sense of proportion, the sense of reserve and of reticence, and above all the feeling of beauty, was equal in both men, and preserved alike the one and the other from all banalities to which a misuse or exaggeration of his own proper methods might have led him. Holbein paints in the methods of the primitives, tempered and enlarged by his own incomparable gift of clear artistic vision. A less man painting in the same method, and seeing the same sights, but with wholly inferior artistic vision, would have ended—as a matter of fact such men did so end—in giving us merely an accurate milliner's pattern.

There are yet two points in the portrait to which I would draw attention. One is that for the first time, so far as I know, Holbein has employed a leaden grayish background in place of the brighter green blues

which he was fond of using in his earlier work. His later portraits repeat this feature, especially where crimson or scarlet occurs in any mass in the sitter's costume, as it does in this instance. The second is a point of greater interest as illustrating Holbein's extraordinary observation of and fidelity to small details of truth. The hands of Queen Jane are painted with as faithful a regard to their individuality as her eyes or any other feature on which the character of a portrait depends. One is struck by the peculiar appearance of the end of the thumb of the right hand, which is folded on the left, and a near examination reveals the fact that the skin is worn as if by needlework, and we are reminded of the fact that Jane Seymour was a noted needlewoman.¹ The detail is of less value in itself than as showing us the absolute faith which we may repose in Holbein's records of his facts.

The year 1537 was the first which has official recognition of Holbein's position as Court painter. On Lady Day of that year an entry occurs in the Account Book of the Royal Expenses of £7 5s. as a quarter's salary to the painter, who had a very short time before performed what may perhaps have been his first strictly official service, when he painted the portrait of Christina, Duchess of Milan, who was the daughter of Isabella, Queen of Denmark, sister of Charles V. The girl had been married at thirteen to Francesco Maria of Milan, and was now a widow at sixteen. There had been much searching by the ambassadors of many courts for a new wife for Henry. Among those who had been suggested for the high but perilous position were Mary of Guise, the widowed Countess of Egmond, and a daughter of the house of Brederode. Henry, who had professed himself somewhat coy, nevertheless had made the proposal to Castillon, the French ambassador, that a selection of French princesses should be brought to Calais for his inspection—an unseemly proposal which Castillon met by a still more unseemly answer. Finally Hutton the ambassador made so favourable a report on the qualities of Christina, that Henry sent Holbein in company with Philip Hobbie (who figures amongst the Windsor drawings) to Brussels, where on March 12th, at one o'clock of the afternoon—it is rarely that we can date a portrait so accurately as this—the young duchess stood for her portrait. By four o'clock that afternoon Holbein had completed the sketch—so we must consider it—from which the wonderful portrait was painted. We are not, indeed, told that Holbein completed a preliminary sketch, but one may feel practically assured that he did so. It is most unlikely that he would have commenced what he

¹ A suite of bedroom trappings and "tapestry," *i.e.*, embroidery, worked by Jane Seymour was in the possession of Charles I., who sold it to the Marquis of Hertford. When the Parliamentary party sold the royal art treasures, the marquis was made to pay £60 as an equivalent for the value of his possession. They have since been lost sight of.



Christina, Duchess of Milan, 1538
National Gallery, London.

must have known was to be a very brief sitting on a panel of the size which we now see. At Windsor, indeed, there is preserved a small panel which has been thought to be this sketch, but if it have any relationship with this portrait of Christina, it is more probably an inferior version by another hand. All that we are able to say is that it is most probable that an original sketch existed and was of smaller size, and that, according to his custom, Holbein painted the larger portrait from it. For we hear that when Hutton saw the sketch that afternoon he was so delighted with its perfection that he at once despatched a messenger to recall a portrait by another artist which was already on its way to England, "since," adds Hutton, "it was but slubbered in comparison." Now to suppose that a panel of the size of the Arundel portrait¹ could have been brought to this state of perfection in three hours is, of course, out of the question.

The art of portraiture can go no further. The young girl, bright, witty, fascinating, and yet with just the shade of sorrow over her, stands at full length before us—she was "exceeding tall and graceful," we are told—in her widow's weeds. Hutton speaks with enthusiasm of her smile, which, whenever she used it, brought two little pits upon her cheeks and one upon her chin which became her exceedingly. But the smile has almost faded from her face as she stands nervously playing with her glove between her slender fingers. The figure is at once girl-like and womanly; the face at once grave for the moment and ready to sparkle into vivacity the next. It is so living, this young girl's portrait, that all our sympathies are quickened as we stand before it. She was not destined to add her name to the list of English queens, and she died later, and for aught one knows happier, as Duchess of Lorraine. Something went wrong with the political situation, and Charles V. turned his back upon the match. Everyone knows the witty saying—evidently the afterthought of some other brain—which tradition has put into her mouth, that if she had had two heads one should be at the disposal of his majesty. She said, of course, nothing of the kind. Yet, if what was told of her bright and lively disposition was true, the moral of the imagined answer was sound for her, and she might, if she had become Queen of England, all innocent have found her way, sooner or later, to Tower Hill through her merry nature.

It was a very different type of nature and of face which Holbein was destined to paint when next he went wife-hunting for Henry. But meanwhile this has become the proper point at which to insert a fact of no small interest in Holbein's career. In the autumn of this same year an entry is found of £10 paid to Hans Holbein for a journey to Burgundy on behalf of the king. What the purpose of this journey was is not stated, nor has

¹ The portrait of Christina has been for many years lent by the Duke of Norfolk to our National Gallery.

any satisfactory explanation been found. Holbein is hardly likely to have been selected as a deputy unless the purpose were artistic. It has been suggested that Henry desired a second portrait of Christina and in Court array. It is difficult to see why he should not have been satisfied with what he had got, nor is any such portrait anywhere to be heard of. The suggestion does not commend itself, though I have no other to put in its place. But the journey is of great interest for more reasons than one. In the first place, Holbein would almost certainly have visited Lyons, and in a later chapter I shall suggest that it was on this occasion that he made arrangements with Melchior Trechsel the publisher for the publication of the "Dance of Death" woodcuts hitherto deferred. He was in Basel early in September of that year, and it was on this occasion that his array of silk and velvet—"whereas he had formerly bought his wine from the tap"—so impressed itself on Iselin, who records it. But Holbein was now a king's painter, and on a king's message, and must dress according to his office. The magistrates of Basel, too, seem to have been impressed by his magnificence, for they had no added means of judging of his art since last he was amongst them. They made a further attempt to retain him amongst them by an agreement drawn up by the council of Basel in October, 1538. In that document they state their estimation of his art, and then desire to employ him upon public works in Basel, recognizing at the same time that his engagement in England cannot be set aside for full two years. They therefore propose that at the end of that time he shall return to Basel and receive from them an annual retaining fee of fifty gulden, with further permission to paint and receive payment on his own account for other works of art, and even to travel to foreign countries solely for the purposes of his profession. Holbein would appear to have accepted these conditions, and perhaps in all good faith. It is recorded, as we have noticed before, that he was anxious for leisure to repaint his works upon the Rathaus walls, and possibly also some of his house paintings about the city. It is declared that the House of the Dance was the only work amidst them all which did not, either by reason of their bad condition or because his taste had altered, give him displeasure. And it may well be that he desired to spend the later days of his life amongst men of his own race and language. But the dream was not to be fulfilled. He was back in England before the end of that year, and only once again left its shores, when, in the July of the next year, he was sent to paint that portrait of Anne of Cleves which forms a part of history.

One is tempted to wonder how far Cromwell in the previous year had really sought to further the Catholic alliance through Christina of Denmark with the Emperor Charles V. If that marriage had taken place it would have been the deathblow to that foreign policy by which Cromwell designed



Anne of Cleves, 1539
The Queen

to unite the Protestant German princes of Europe—the Duke of Cleves, the Landgrave, the Elector of Saxony—in one great combination with England. Even at the time when Henry was negotiating for the hand of Christina, Anne of Cleves had already been spoken of. No sooner had the negotiations failed than Cromwell once more proposed the alliance with the German princess. Late in July of 1539 Holbein was at the castle of Düren in Cleves, where he made a portrait of the lady, which Wotton wrote of as “a very lively image.” There is an old but unwarranted tradition, which has been so often repeated that it has taken a permanent place in history, that Holbein of set purpose painted a flattering portrait. Froude, who accepts the tradition without examination, goes so far as to take it for granted that Cromwell had told Holbein to find beauties where there might be few. The tradition, however amusing and tempting, has absolutely no authority. No reproach of the kind was uttered against Holbein in that day. Henry complained only of the descriptions which had been given him of her beauties and her qualities, and even in the first hour of his dismay after seeing her he merely replied to Cromwell’s anxious inquiry of how he found her, “Nothing so well favoured as she hath been described.” The portrait was never mentioned as a source of his deception. It was with Cromwell, and with Cromwell only, that the blame appears to have rested in Henry’s mind. Cromwell endeavoured to shift the blame on to poor Southampton, who had brought her over from Calais, and had admittedly, under the circumstances, which were discouraging, said his best for her, and tried in that short time to teach her her one sound accomplishment of playing cards. Cromwell would have been equally ready, and it is to be feared Southampton also, to shift the whole responsibility on to the poor portrait-painter if the portrait could have been convicted of lying. But as we look into that face—the picture now hangs in the Louvre—we see nothing which at all contradicts the verdict which was pronounced upon her. It is a placid, imperturbable, sweet-faced lady, without a spark of vivacity or a trace of intellect. She had been brought up absolutely without interests; she spoke no language but her native Dutch; she played on no instrument—it was regarded as a sign of “lightnesse for great ladies” to do so in North Germany of that day—and she possessed no skill of any kind save that of her needle. But the testimony of those amongst whom she came as queen was that she was gentle and passively amiable, though they did not neglect to enumerate all the other shortcomings which they saw in her. She had learned in the retirement of her father’s court neither to move nor speak nor think as a princess. But Holbein was merely called upon to paint the quiet, placid, insipid personality which he saw in that gorgeous setting of scarlet velvet and gold brocade, and laces and broderies sewn with seed pearls. And he produced undeniably a lovely picture out of these

mixed materials. It was the fault of those who had means of knowing better if they chose to see in it the portrait of a vivacious, highly-cultivated and fascinating girl. Even if Holbein could have been persuaded, which I do not for a moment believe to have been possible, to falsify the likeness, he must by that time have known Henry too well to enter into a conspiracy to play such tricks upon him. But there is no evidence that the likeness was not perfectly faithful.

The picture is of no great size, and is painted on vellum which has been laid down upon panel. The richness and softness of the work is greatly aided by the use of this material. It is needless to repeat all that has been said in describing the characteristics of Holbein's methods upon the portrait of Jane Seymour. All that was there said applies with equal force to this sumptuously painted picture, which, though it has had no great honour paid to it in the past, is beyond question one of the treasures of the Louvre collection.

Cromwell fell, as we have seen, a few months after the marriage, and was succeeded in power by his deadly foe Norfolk, and when Anne of Cleves had retired as placidly and as undemonstratively as she had arrived, and Catherine Howard, Norfolk's niece, presently filled her place, the family fortunes of that house did indeed seem to have reached their zenith. How that venture ended is too well known. Once more we may spare ourselves the reading of a soiled page, since there is nothing more important than the miniature at Windsor to connect the name of Holbein with that ill-fated creature. And with her the series of royal portraits by Holbein as Court painter may be said to have ended. Henry married Catherine Parr in the July of the year 1543, a month or two only before the painter's death, and no authentic portrait of the last of Henry's queens by Holbein is known to exist.

Of Henry's children genuine portraits by Holbein are also far from numerous. Among the drawings at Windsor is one which bears the title "Lady Mary after Queen." It is, however, considered very doubtful, and is not generally accepted. I do not know the exact grounds of its rejection. So far as mere portraiture is considered, if the shape of the girlish features, and, above all, the unalterable bony structure of the face be examined, there is no reason why the girl of this drawing should not have grown into the worn-looking, sad-faced woman whom Antony Mor painted for Philip II. with such intimate perception. Possibly it may be objected to the Windsor drawing that it is most unlikely that Mary, more or less in exile from the Court, should have come within the list of Holbein's sitters. But it happens that in the very year 1536, when Holbein's employment at the Court began—the year of the death of Katharine of Aragon and of Anne Boleyn—the reconciliation took place between Mary and her father, and for the next

EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES

WINDSOR CASTLE

Edward Prince of Wales.



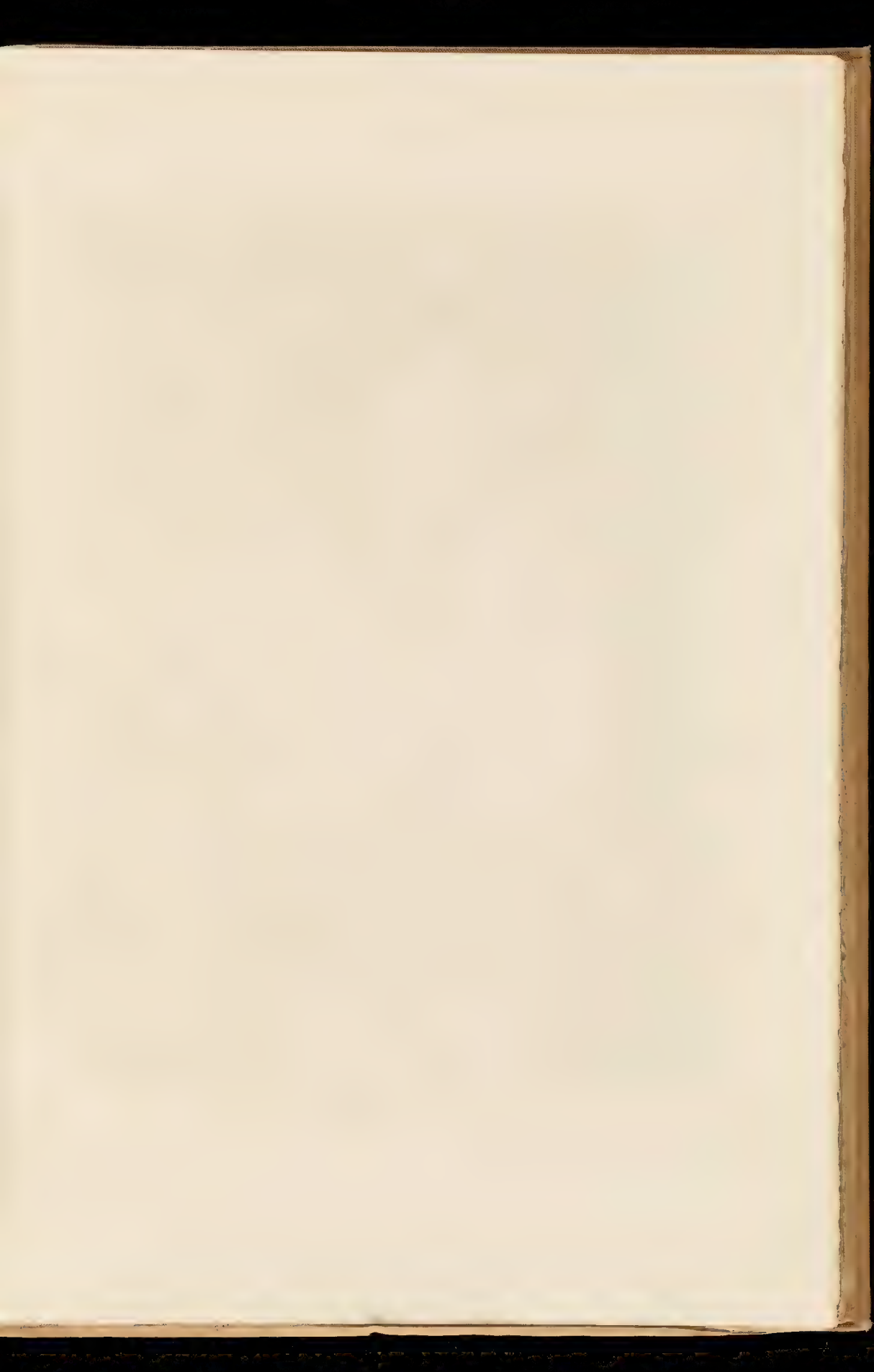
year or two, and indeed until the Northern Rebellion once more imperilled her position, she was constantly at the royal palaces, at Richmond, Greenwich, Whitehall, and St. James's. She was friendly with Jane Seymour, and in 1537 she stood sponsor to her half-brother Edward VI., and it is evident therefore that for a year or two there must have been numerous occasions on which Holbein could have obtained the sitting of an hour or two which would have sufficed him for that sketch. More than this one cannot say.

Of Edward VI. a little portrait exists at Hanover, painted apparently when the child was about two years old, and this age corresponds with the date at which we know that Holbein painted a portrait of the little prince as a New-year's gift to Henry (January 1st, 1539), receiving as an acknowledgment a gilt cup made by Cornelis the jeweller. There is a drawing at Windsor which may be the original study for this picture. It is needless to say that the portraits of Edward VI. as a child of eight or nine years old which appear from time to time under the name of Holbein are rendered impossible by the mere calculation of dates.

Of Elizabeth no portrait by Holbein exists. The baby princess was moved from Court when her mother was executed, and perhaps Holbein never even saw her. Of Henry, Duke of Richmond, Henry's natural son, whom he more than once in the absence of a legal heir proposed to have made his successor, there is a drawing at Windsor and also a miniature. The face bears a striking resemblance to his father's. In the same collection is a drawing of the Duchess of Richmond, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk and sister of Surrey the poet, in whose fate she played an unenviable part.

It may seem upon the whole, when we have sifted the genuine and unquestionable works of Holbein from the crowd of pretenders that exist under his name, that his direct work in his capacity as Court painter was less abundant than we should have expected from one whose power of producing a living likeness in its most sumptuous surroundings must have been evident to royal eyes. A portrait by Holbein, however, was not a thing that was produced in a day. The speed and directness of his preliminary sketch is borne witness to by many small items of circumstantial evidence. But the finished perfection of his painted portraits could never have been obtained save at the cost of patient and concentrated work, requiring no small expenditure of time. And the collateral claims upon his time were many and incessant. There was no branch of applied design which lay outside the province of the Court painter, and there was none, moreover, into which the eager, all-embracing artistic nature of Holbein did not throw itself with an enthusiasm which predicated complete absorption in its task for the time being. Household decoration, costume, silver work,

jewellery, books, all these interests claimed him, and rarely has an artistic temperament expressed itself in so many directions and with such mastery in each. And the real force of Holbein's individuality can be understood less by the great masterpieces which he himself produced, and by which it is so easy for us to recognize him, than by the stamp of his personal style which he left upon English art of every description, pictorial and applied, in that day. The vast number of works by imitators and followers, ceilings and wall paintings, weapons and personal ornaments, and a hundred other decorative objects which are assigned to his name in England, bear testimony to the widespread influence of his design and of his spirit. It is not too much to say that English Art in all departments struck no other note from that time forward till the day when Van Dyck and Rubens became names to conjure with in our country.





Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk
Windsor Castle

CHAPTER XIX

OTHER PORTRAITS OF THE COURT DAYS AND LAST PERIOD

THE perusal of a list of the portraits of English men and English women whom Holbein painted for us, calling up the mixed memories of that Tudor time, repeats to us the tale which is everlastingly told and retold all through the pages of history, that a despotism of any shape, while it brings out into high relief the noble, the strong, and the true characters, yet also helps to produce in undue proportion the base, the mean, and the subservient. The careers of some of those who stood highest about the Court in Henry's days make sorry reading, and none more so than that of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, whose portrait, painted when he was sixty-six years old, hangs to-day at Windsor.

Born in 1473, he had married the daughter of King Edward IV., the Princess Anne, who died early, his second wife being the daughter of that Duke of Buckingham who was executed in 1520. His married life was made miserable by his own vice and by the family feuds that grew out of it, his son Surrey siding with his father, the stronger side—for it was a Howard trait to lean in such direction—against his mother, who, a woman of strong temper, had good grounds for bringing it into play. Norfolk had opportunities in life both as a man of action and a holder of high position which left him no cause to rail at fortune. He was in command of the van of the English army at Flodden Field in 1513, and a military reputation, which was never justified by one single achievement of serious value, followed him through life. He succeeded Wolsey as the guide of the king's policy when the cardinal fell, his claim to Henry's confidence lying in the fact that as the representative of a great Catholic family he was ready to support the divorce with all his influence. He seemed to have earned the reward of his time-serving when presently his daughter was married to Henry's natural son, the Duke of Richmond, and when his niece, Anne Boleyn, became Queen of England. He thought it not unseemly to preside at the council which first examined the unhappy queen, and again at the council which condemned her. After the first occasion, that same evening in the Tower, Anne complained to her waiting-women that Norfolk had handled her very harshly, and had stopped her mouth when she protested her innocence. Her complaint was doubtless true. It was

one of Norfolk's ways of showing his devotion to Henry, and a week or so later, in the same loyal spirit, he did not ask leave of absence from the side of his niece's scaffold. We have seen him on the day of Cromwell's arrest, when he could find it part of the dignity of the president of the council to tear the chain from his fallen adversary's throat. He rose by Cromwell's fall, but his hand upon the helm was feeble and ineffective. His own time was to come later. As Hertford, Jane Seymour's brother, rose to influence, so did the Howard's star wane. It was easy at that date to prove a charge of treason. But in this case the father was to be reached through the son. Surrey, less subtle and more foolish, was free of speech. He had quartered, too, the royal arms upon his shield, believing it to be his right by descent from Edward. This and a few more trivialities were enough at a period when, so far as I know, for seventeen years no one put upon his trial for high treason was acquitted. Surrey paid the penalty, and his alleged treason was stretched to include his father Norfolk. Norfolk's daughter, the Duchess of Richmond, bore willing testimony against her father and her brother. The miserable family feud of Norfolk's own making had reached to that pass. Norfolk's chickens had come home to roost. He played his last card now, and perhaps not unsuccessfully. He made no effort to defend his son, but left him to his fate. For himself he tried the desperate venture of pleading guilty, and assigning the whole of his estates and wealth to the little Prince Edward, whereby at least the nobles of the council could have no hope of spoil through his death. The experiment answered. His safety was to come by a sort of ironical gratitude from the master whom he had himself served all his life—from Time. On the night of January 27th, when Henry lay dying, Norfolk too lay in the Tower waiting for his execution. When the dawn broke the news reached the Constable that the king had died in the night, and Norfolk was spared by the narrow margin of a few hours. The portrait is a transparently truthful rendering of a personality which it is impossible to call other than a hateful one. The cold, selfish face that looks out at one from the panel carries on it not so much the presence of any bad quality—there is hardly force or sympathy enough in it for that—as the negation of all good ones. It stares stonily, almost vacantly, before us out of the small, suspicious, uneasy eyes. The pompous apparel which the great lord wears by virtue of his office as Lord High Steward of the Council only seems to emphasize the chilling self-importance of the man. It is not amongst the portraits of Holbein which give us the greatest aesthetic pleasure as we look at it, nor could it well be so; but as a piece of direct unerring intuition there is no work by the painter that may be placed before it.

A very lovely drawing at Windsor gives us the face of the son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey by courtesy. By a strange mistake the sponsor

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY
WINDSOR CASTLE

Thomas Earl of Surrey.



SIR RICHARD SOUTHWELL

WINDSOR CASTLE

... Knight,



... Knight ...

for the Windsor series—Sir John Cheke or other—has printed the name above it as of Thomas Howard, that is to say, that Duke of Norfolk who shaped the old monastery of Charterhouse into Howard House, and died in 1572 upon the scaffold in Elizabeth's reign. But that same Thomas Howard, son of the poet, grandson of Henry's Norfolk, was born in 1536, and no portrait beyond the age of seven years could have been drawn by Holbein. We must alter the title to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, though it must be admitted that it looks young, even if it dates from the earliest opportunity which Holbein could have had of drawing him. Henry Howard has earned a place in English literature as one of the first, according to his brother poet, Thomas Wyatt (of whom a noble drawing is at Windsor), who polished "the homely rudeness of our vulgar poesie" to the models of Italian verse. As a boy he had been the chosen companion at Windsor of Henry, Duke of Richmond, the king's natural son, and he describes the years thus spent, whether by poetical metaphor or no is doubtful, in one of his poems as a time of imprisonment and yearning. He was spoken of at one time, probably by his father's prompting, as the future husband of the Princess Mary, but eventually married Frances Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. He is described as "the most foolish proud boy in the king's majesty's dominions," and certainly, when we read of his being summoned in 1543 before the king's council for shooting pellets by night at the windows of citizens of London with a small crossbow, we cannot think he suffered much wrong by the description. The defence which he offered, that he did it to awake the citizens to a sense of their sins, does not diminish the probability of the description. Catapulting at night at the age of twenty-seven is a form of recreation which carries with it a *prima facie* case for the accusation. One wishes, indeed, that folly were the only trait recorded of his character. But he, too, could find it within his chivalry to act as marshal for his father at his cousin Anne Boleyn's trial, and later to stand by the scaffold of his other cousin, Catherine, that he might be purged of all suspicion of sympathy with her. Family ties sat loose in that age of treacherous walking, and a few years later, when his own life was in peril, it was by the spiteful garrulity of a sister, and by the trumped-up evidence of his friend, Sir Richard Southwell, that his own life was to be forfeit.

Of the said Sir Richard Southwell a fine drawing is preserved at Windsor, and two finished portraits by Holbein, one in the Uffizi at Florence and the other in the Louvre, preserve the features of a man who had little to make him worth remembering. He it was who played the meanest part in the preliminaries of Sir Thomas More's trial. When called upon by More he had conveniently "not heard" a conversation between More and Rich, which took place in his presence, and which might have

saved the chancellor. He was in his friend Surrey's case equally fortunate in having heard and being able to repeat what probably never was said, or, if said, was the mere unguarded talk which passes between friends. His portrait merely helps us to fill, and none too pleasantly, some of the minor spaces in Holbein's great panorama of that time.

Of William Fitzwilliam, Earl of Southampton, whose name has already been mentioned, there is a very fine and expressive study at Windsor. He was a sailor—Froude has christened him the Nelson of his day—but he was unhappily a courtier also in a day which turned frank natures into meaner metal. He is found more than once doing, and not unwillingly, the work that should have been left to baser men. It was he who tore the Garter from the neck of his friend, the fallen Cromwell. It was he who, with Norfolk, undertook the sorry task of browbeating the miserable prostrate Catherine Howard in her imprisonment into her undoubtedly true confession. As one looks at Holbein's drawing and remembers all this, one sees in that somewhat coarse and perhaps rather common exterior a guarantee for the truth both of the likeness and the recorded history.

Amongst the Windsor drawings is one which has a peculiar and terrible interest. It is a very slight much-faded drawing of a girl, seen full face at half length, with her arms akimbo. The face is very striking and unforgettable, and the charm of Holbein's drawing at first perhaps conveys to one the idea of a personality more pleasing than it becomes on better knowledge. It bears the title "Lady Parker," and it is generally accepted, and has been more than once published as the wife of Henry Parker, Lord Morley, who served many offices of the Court and was a man of letters. But that lady was fifty years old in 1536, and moreover her husband had been Lord Morley since 1523. She would, therefore, have been known in Holbein's day only as Lady Morley, and it becomes evident that this drawing must represent her daughter, who was doubtless known at Court as the Lady Parker, and who became the wife of George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, brother of Anne Boleyn. It was Lady Rochford, once Parker, who furnished the first materials for Anne Boleyn's destruction. It was she who gave the incredible evidence which brought her own husband, Lord Rochford, to the block, a few days before his sister. She remained about the Court to become the lady-in-waiting to Jane Seymour as she had been to Anne, and a few years later she served Catherine Howard in the same capacity, and was the abettor of her profligacy. She went out of her mind with terror a few days before the trial, but was carefully tended that she might give evidence, and she died, in a state of prostrate stupefaction, on the same scaffold as her mistress. The painting is one of the slightest, and yet in some respects one of the most remarkable in the series. It is lightly touched, and has the appearance of being one of the most hastily handled. It has not been reinforced by the

LADY PARKER

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Parker.



same trenchant method which has been applied to others, and it remains a strange dim evanescent memory, not without a certain mysterious fascination, of one of whom one can but say that it would have been better if she had never been born.

It is a relief to turn away to many of these wonderful drawings which either bear no name or bear names that were happy in that they did not help to make history. Such is the delicate and refined drawing of Lady Heveningham, a face of the sweetest type, whom, though she was cousin of Anne Boleyn, fate permitted to live the quiet life of an English lady away from Windsor. Such is the firm and solid drawing of the Lady Butts, wife of the king's physician, from whose homely countenance the varnish of the Court has not polished out the honest wrinkles which time and good nature have printed there; such, too, is the Lady Lister, whose little daughter lies in the Cloister of Westminster with the touching inscription, "Jane Lister, Deare Childe." Such, too, are the nameless portraits, some of them of exquisite beauty, of the men and women who lived and walked in the English homes of that day, and who have left no memorial beyond these nameless yet living records by Hans Holbein.

It is, indeed, not possible to attempt to describe or even barely to enumerate the portraits by Holbein in English and foreign galleries which so far have escaped mention in this book. Their omission is unavoidable, and will be understood and forgiven by the reader. An attempt to include them could only result either in a very barren mention of them, or in a very monotonous and wearisome catalogue. It has been my endeavour in dealing with the portraiture of Holbein to select such examples as are either typical of his art through their handling and treatment or through some other form of excellence, or such as bring before us some interesting personality or connect themselves with some great historical events. It would swell this book to double the intended size, and it would not add appreciably to its purpose, if I were to attempt a detailed account of all his works. The writer who undertakes the life of Holbein finds his embarrassment chiefly in the wealth of his material.

The last picture to which the name of Holbein has been attached is that which was commissioned by the Company of Barber-Surgeons and hangs in the hall of the company. It represents King Henry VIII. granting the charter of the company to its eighteen representatives. The picture has been sadly injured and so heavily repainted that it is impossible to assert that Holbein had handled any part of it. Samuel Pepys, who had an eye to a good picture, though his connoisseurship, to judge by his visit to Nonsuch House, did not go to the height of distinguishing Rubens from Holbein, tells us that he went to try and buy this picture, which had a great reputation, after the fire at Barber-Surgeons' Hall, and he adds naively that he

hoped to have got it for £200, it being worth £1,000. But the bargain fell through, Pepys recording his opinion that it was none so good a picture as he had hoped, nor yet so pleasing, and, moreover, that it was greatly spoiled—presumably by the recent fire, since it had been painted but 140 years or so. Among the kneeling doctors the figure of John Chambers, the king's physician, is very prominent, and the portrait of this hale old Englishman, at the age of eighty-eight, hangs now in the gallery of Vienna, painted in the last year of Holbein's life, and probably even the last important picture that he ever touched. The known career of Holbein as a portrait painter began with a masterpiece, the "Jakob Meier and the Dorothea Kannengiesser." It was to end, too, with a masterpiece. The paint had not hardened on the panel of "John Chambers" when Hans Holbein, still a young man and full of hope and vigour, was laid in his grave.



*Reskymmer, a Cornish Gentleman
Wimborne Court*

CHAPTER XX

WORK FOR THE WOOD-ENGRAVER

IT has been often said that if Rembrandt had left us nothing but his etchings we should, on that evidence only, have had to place him in the first rank of great masters. It is equally true that if we had nothing left of Holbein beyond his nameless work for the woodcutter we should know that there had been once in Germany also a master thinker, designer, and draughtsman.

The number of woodcuts which have been attributed to the design of Holbein amounts to over three hundred. I speak of those only which have a *prima facie* claim to be considered, omitting the very large number which are assigned to him with little or no plausibility. Of the three hundred aforesaid a certain number will always afford a battlefield for experts, the evidence being complicated by so many uncertainties, and obscured by so many difficulties, that an infallible conclusion in many cases must not be hoped for.

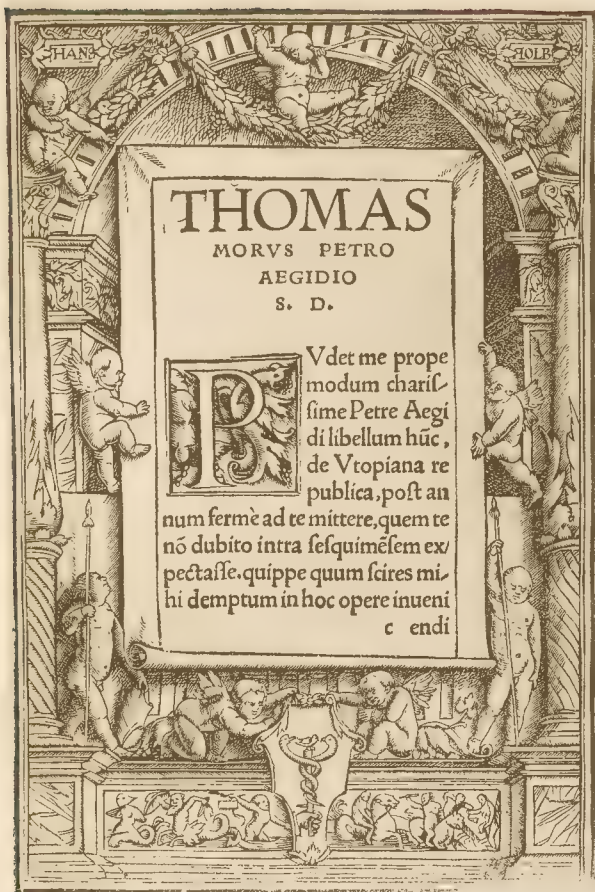
In one of the early chapters of this book I pointed out the strange fact that for the first seventeen years of Holbein's life, and up to the time of his migration to Basel, we have practically no evidence to appeal to of work actually accomplished by him. This fact at once faces us again when we have to deal with Holbein's woodcuts, which begin to appear in full abundance with his Basel period. There can be little doubt that the attraction which led the brothers Ambros and Hans to that city was the hope of finding work from the many printing firms established there. And that hope was at once fulfilled. But we can hardly suppose that their first efforts in designing for woodcuts were made at Basel. Their immediate success with such men as Froben, Petri, and Wolff implies that the two young men had already had experience in drawing designs upon wood, and this experience could only have been gained at Augsburg. Yet the evidence for this is wholly wanting. The presses of Augsburg issued a large number of early printed books embellished with woodcuts,¹ but the quality of these cuts shows that before the arrival of Jobst Diennecker in about 1510 the Augsburg school of woodcutters was not only far inferior to the rival school of Nuremberg, but was intrinsically poor. And it matters not how excellent a man's

¹ Some fine examples of Augsburg early printed work are to be seen in the Germanic Museum at Nuremberg.

design may be, and how full of individuality, that excellence and that individuality are doomed to disappear under the knife of a bad engraver. It is therefore quite possible that drawings designed by the two brothers may have gone out amongst the works put forth by the Augsburg printers and yet we are not able to recognize them. When in 1510 Jobst Dienecker was imported from the Netherlands, especially, it is said, to cut the blocks for "Teuerdanck" and the "Weisskunig," he raised the standard in a very short time, and gathered around him a band of able apprentices. But it is obvious that these two boys would not command the services of such engravers, whose hands, moreover, were more than full with Burgkmair's and Schäufelein's commissions. The question is not without importance, since, if my view be correct, and if the boys had really designed for woodcut during their residence at Augsburg, it is an emphatic proof of the difficulty of recognizing the work of a special artist under the disguising hand of a bad woodcutter.

And this brings us to the very interesting question which, after many years of debate, may be now at last regarded as almost decided. Did Holbein himself cut any of his blocks? Sixty years ago this question would have been answered in the affirmative. The statement was broadly made and repeated without question that Holbein was the cutter as well as the designer of the woodcuts which pass under his name. The growth of expert criticism has, however, as in the case of Albrecht Dürer, brought about a complete change of view, and it would not now be easy to find experts who would uphold the original opinion. We may, indeed, reserve to ourselves the conjecture that a young man whose energies sought outlets in so many directions, and who must have been thrown amongst many who were earning their bread at that craft, may have tried his hand at cutting a block or two. But the craft had already become highly specialized, and though there were artists who appear to have been capable of cutting their own blocks, yet at this period in Germany it had evidently ceased to be customary; and the artist confined himself to drawing his design upon the wood, which was then handed over—often to its great loss—to the woodcutter. A reference to the case of Hans Burgkmair made in an earlier page may here be repeated with profit. It will be remembered that Peutinger in a letter to Maximilian explains that the blocks for "Teuerdanck" are at a standstill during the absence from Augsburg of a skilled engraver. He will, he says, move in the matter as speedily as he can, and if necessary find someone else to do it. "The painter here," he adds, "is very clever at the work." Woltmann interprets this latter phrase as meaning that Hans Burgkmair was clever at woodcutting, and that Peutinger would endeavour to persuade him to do the cutting if the engraver did not return. For my own part, I cannot think it is anything more than a

DEDICATION PAGE TO SIR T. MORE'S "UTOPIA"



statement that Burgkmair was making very clever drawings—the word “work” being equivocal. But even if it bears Woltmann’s interpretation, it results from the whole passage that it was unusual for the artist to cut his own blocks, and that the method would only be resorted to under necessity, preference being evidently given to the work of the professed woodcutter, it being even worth while to wait so as to secure the services of the latter.¹ The incident would seem to point to the fact that the cutting of woodblocks was an art already specialized so far as to be in the hands of a separate body of craftsmen, unlike the arts of engraving on metal, which was still practised *pari passu* by the painters of Italy and Germany. Another incidental argument is derived from the facts which connect themselves with the “Dance of Death.” That series, though it was cut and proved before 1526, was not issued till 1538, when it appeared in book form with a preface stating that one of the series, “The Waggoner,” remained unfinished owing to the death of the artist (*i.e.*, Hans Lützelburger). Now, if Holbein had been himself a wood-engraver of experience, it is hardly likely that he would have failed to finish the work himself. It would have been a matter only for a day or two, and we have already seen reason to believe that he was at Lyons in the year of the publication in 1538, when he could easily have accomplished the task.

And again, if Holbein himself had been the engraver of his own blocks, we should find in his early designs at Basel especially an uniformity of style which could not have failed to proclaim itself. His designs for woodcuts were very numerous, and offered a broad opportunity for the formation of a distinct style. But one of the great difficulties which meets us in determining whether a woodcut page is to be assigned to him, or to his brother, or to some other, lies in the great inequality of the cutting, which constantly obscures the issue. Each of the printers for whom Holbein drew, Froben, Petri, Kratander, Bebel, Wolff, Froschover, maintained probably his own staff of cutters, into whose hands the block with the drawing on it would be given. Some of the results are excellent, but some are very inferior, and it cannot be said that there is any approach to an uniformity of style in the cutting.

One of the early designs which Holbein produced was the title-page for the new edition of Sir Thomas More’s “Utopia,” which had been placed in the hands of Froben, probably at the suggestion of Erasmus. This same title-page was, it may be observed, employed again for other publications by Froben. The repetition of a title-page which had already done service in another book was no uncommon thing at that date. The subjects which were chosen to decorate the page were rarely so intimately connected

¹ I believe, however, as a matter of fact there is no evidence whatever of Hans Burgkmair having ever cut a block.

with the subject-matter of the book that they could not with equal fitness be employed upon another book. They were commonly subjects chosen from the classics, and especially from the "Gesta Romanorum," to typify, under an allegorical figure, some special virtue, and they were equally applicable to any other book which inculcated even in a somewhat remote degree the practice of such virtue. Thus we find the page for More's "Utopia" doing duty for a "Dictionarium Chaldaicum," for an edition of Erasmus' "Discourse upon Death," and for later works. The very charming little illustration in the "Utopia" of the ancient mariner, Raphael Hythlodæus, telling his tale in the garden to Aegidius and More, is by brother Ambros, and there are other woodcuts in the book by him and by Urs Graf the goldsmith, who was at this time designing a good many blocks for the publishers at Basel. In More's answer to the letter which Erasmus wrote him to introduce Holbein, no mention is made of these illustrations, which one would have thought would have been enough to have recalled the name of the Holbeins to More. But it is probable that the woodcuts which embellished the early printed books were regarded by most people at that time as merely a component part of the printer's enterprise, and called up no more idea of the special existence of the artist than the shape and design of the type did of the personality of the compositor.

An extremely interesting page is that which is again found in several works published by Froben about 1522. It is known as the Picture (*πίναξ*) of Cebes, and it has primary reference to that treatise of which Cebes, probably the disciple of Socrates, was the author. Briefly, the purport of the discourse was to show the state of man under the title of a Picture of Human Life. All men, he taught, come into this world from a previous state, and arrive in it in various degrees of perfection to pass through it as a further period of probation. They may degenerate through vice, or folly, or mischance, from the high state in which they arrived, to a lower state; or they may by the practice of the virtues and by self-education and cultivation reach a higher stage. Holbein uses this picture of the various virtues and defects of life to produce a page which is not only full of interest and explanatory of its meaning, but also, when regarded as a mere page of decoration, is very dignified and rich.¹ This page served as a title-page to the "Lexicon Graecolatinum" of Konrad Gessner, and for the title-page of Erasmus' New Testament in 1522, as well as for Froben's address to his readers in the edition of "Augustin de Civitate Dei," which bears the printer's date of August 1, 1522.

Two sheets on a much larger scale than usual were designed by Holbein for the title-page and first page of the statutes of the town of

¹ For this, and indeed for nearly all the woodcuts mentioned in this chapter, the reader is referred to the Print Room of the British Museum.



5. ABRAHAM'S OFFERING



6. ISAAC BLESSETH JACOB



8. PHARAOH'S DREAM



11. MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH



20. NADAB AND ABIHU



32. BOAZ AND RUTH



33. HANNAH AND ELKANAH

ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

(BASEL)



35. DAVID AND GOLIATH



57. SENNACHERIB'S HOST



58. THE RETURN FROM THE CAPTIVITY



62. JOB



68. DAVID WRITING THE PSALMS



87. AMOS PREACHING

ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

(BASEL)

Freiburg, and they bear the date of 1520. The title-page has the arms of the city, and the inner page—they are printed back to back—has an extremely fine Madonna and Child. The latter, indeed, is as satisfying as anything which occurs in the whole range of Holbein's designs, being broad without coarseness and graceful without loss of strength. Another fine page of somewhat later date, namely 1526, is the title for "*Christiani Matrimonii Institutio*" by Erasmus, printed by Froben, while from the printing-house of Adam Petri comes, in 1523, the New Testament in German. The figure of St. Peter on the title-page holding a large key is designed in Holbein's simplest and most impressive style.

There are many other pages which deserve mention, if mention without description were of value, and if description itself without examination of the original could convey any real idea of the appearance and feeling of the woodcut. I would most strongly counsel the reader who desires to understand and sympathize with this particular manifestation of Holbein's genius, to spend a few hours in the British Museum print room, or in any of the chief print rooms of the Continent. And time thus spent in examining at leisure a few of the best of the woodcuts undoubtedly designed by Holbein will enable the reader to form for himself a standard of comparison. It will further enable him to appreciate the largeness of manner, the clearness of thought, the fertility of invention, and the dignity of expression which the young artist—for most of these woodcuts were designed before he was twenty-nine years old—displayed in this branch of his work. It is obvious that it is work which can never be rightly appreciated, because it can be so little seen by the great majority of men. The very scarceness of these woodcuts makes them objects for the museum print room or the collector's cabinet only. They can never for that very reason take their share in bringing Holbein's art home to the minds of men in the same way as the line engravings from Dürer's own hand have helped to make him known and understood. There may be still in existence a score or two of some of the less scarce of Dürer's plates. A muster of all the copies which exist even of his scarcer plates would make a larger show than is sometimes supposed. But it would not be possible to bring together six complete sets of the proofs of Holbein's "*Dance of Death*."

I spoke in an earlier chapter of the woodcut portrait of Erasmus resting his hand on the bust of Terminus, which ultimately formed the title-page to the complete works of Erasmus issued in 1540 by Hieronymus Froben, son of Johannes Froben. I dealt with it at that point merely from the point of view of portrait, but this is clearly the place at which a few words upon its technical qualities are needed. The aims and limitations of early wood engraving at a time when it confined itself almost entirely to expression by line demanded from the artist a power of expressing himself

completely by the simplest possible means. In the endeavour to meet this necessity not a few of the painters who designed for woodcut fell into conventions which they hoped would be accepted, and which indeed presently came to be accepted, and they employed a line which has a certain artistic interest and gives a certain pleasure to the eye, but which is as a matter of fact often inexpressive and sometimes dull. The lines are often mere boundary lines to the figures; they are not a living sensitive part of the modelling of the form. The power of giving expression by the fewest possible lines is a much coveted gift which belongs to few artists. Holbein possessed it as few other men ever have. It may be seen in every drawing of that wonderful Windsor series. The power of selecting all the lines which are needed, but not one more than is needed, is there visible in its highest development. And precisely the same power differently employed displays itself in Holbein's designs for woodcuts, and perhaps in none so markedly as in this drawing of Erasmus. There is not one line which could be removed without taking away from the full expression of the subject, and yet if a score more lines were added they could give us no more. The little figure seems to be alive. If it be compared with the line engraving of Erasmus by Dürer, the difference of vitality becomes at once apparent. The comparison on that score is enormously in favour of Holbein.

It has often been assumed, owing to the masterly simplicity and expressiveness of the engraving, that this portrait of Erasmus was cut by Hans Lützelburger. There are, however, some obvious difficulties in this view, though on the score of style I should, in the absence of these difficulties, have agreed with the opinion. Lützelburger was dead in 1526, the year of Holbein's first departure from Basel. If the drawing had been already cut by that date it is hard to understand why it should have been held over for fourteen years before it was used for one of the many works by Erasmus which the Froben issued. There was not the same reason for withholding it which I shall presently show to have existed in the case of other woodcuts and of the "Dance of Death" itself. Moreover, the latter series, and the Bible cuts, both published in 1538, do not seem ever to have been in the hands of the Froben, whereas this drawing of Erasmus certainly was, and there could have been no good reason for allowing it to lie idle.

The same cannot be said in the case of two very important woodcuts, both probably engraved by Lützelburger, which were never published at all, and of which only a very few proofs were pulled. These were the cuts known as "Christ the True Light" and "The Sale of Indulgences." Both contained matter which distinctly came within that catalogue of "controversial matter" whose publication had been forbidden by the town council of Basel in 1524. The latter, indeed, by its very title connected itself with

that war against the papacy which had been practically proclaimed by Luther. Both of them contained possible cause of offence, which, in the heated state of religious feeling no publisher at Basel would be likely to take the risk of. If Lützelburger was the cutter, they were probably completed shortly before 1526, during the very crisis of the religious struggle. They were, we may suppose, not a commission from any publisher or individual, but the outcome of Holbein's own views, his contribution, and a very trenchant one, to the Reformation question, which his own wisdom, or that of his friends, led him to suppress.

The subject known as "Christ the True Light" is an oblong engraving, of which the centre is occupied by a burning lamp on an upright richly-ornamented stand, supported by the signs of the four evangelists. By it is Christ, who with His left hand points to the flame of the lamp. On His left a crowd of philosophers and men of learning, headed by Plato, who is just disappearing into a pit, and Aristotle, who is on the point of sharing his fate, turn away from Christ. A pope is among the crowd, and an abbot, while a figure who has been supposed, and I think correctly, to represent Erasmus, brings up the rear. On Christ's right hand a crowd of simple folk in the garb of working men, one of them in an artisan's jerkin, one a labourer carrying a flail, press forward to hear Christ. The satire is evidently aimed at those who were putting their trust in learning only as the true means of enlightening the world, while, unconsciously perhaps, they are turning their back upon Christ. If we be right in thinking the final figure to be Erasmus, his being put there by Holbein suggests very curious thoughts, which, however, we cannot here follow out. The woodcut is noticeable for the exquisitely expressed landscape of mountains, full of suggestion of colour under the light which radiates, as if from a sun, downwards from the lamp of life—an effect which is produced by the same simple means, and recalls the landscape in the "Ploughman" of the "Dance of Death" series.

The other woodcut, the "Sale of Indulgences," is also divided into two parts. The half on the right hand presents a magnificent court or hall, in which sits a pope, shown by the coats of arms with the six palle of the Medici, to be intended for Clement VII. (Giuliano de' Medici), who was Pope from 1523 to 1534. He is handing a brief, probably a letter of indulgence, to a kneeling monk. At a table below a monk and a secretary are selling indulgences to the crowd who press with their money about the table. On the extreme right another ecclesiastic sits in the richly-canopied stalls and gives absolution with one hand to a kneeling youth, while with the other he holds out a little box on the end of a rod for the receipt of offerings. A woman is depositing her fine in an ironbound coffer. On the other half of the drawing is seen the Almighty in the clouds. Before

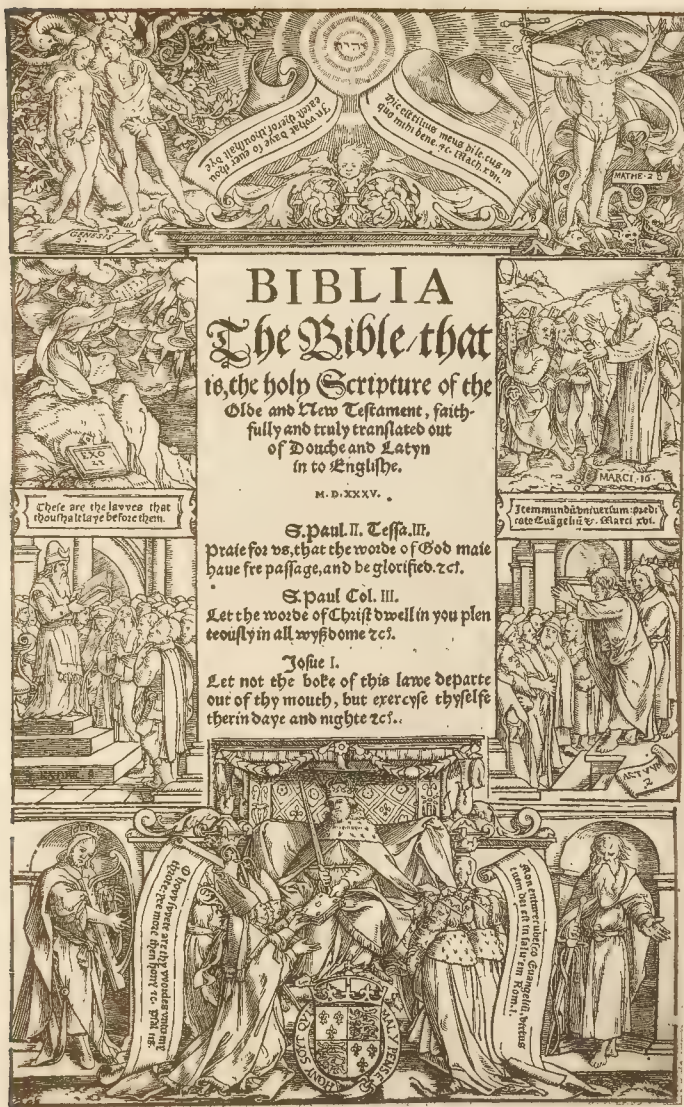
Him stand or kneel in repentance David, Manasses, and one who is called the "offen sinner"—probably intended for the sinner in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Here again the whole meaning is quite obvious—the contrast lying between the only true forgiveness which results from true penitence, and the spurious imitation which can be purchased for money.

Of these two very important examples of Holbein's work for the woodcutter, the "Sale of Indulgences" seems to me to show the more unmistakable affinities with Lützelburger's known work, and I have no practical doubt that it proceeds from his hand. I feel less absolute assurance in the case of the "Christ the True Light," but at the same time I should assign it to Lützelburger. The two were probably amongst the last woodcuts drawn by Holbein before his departure from Basel in 1526. He does not seem to have done much work for the woodcutter during his second visit to Basel, probably owing to the fact that both Froben and Lützelburger were by this time both dead. Still less does he seem to have been ready to trust his drawings to the mercies of the English wood-engravers, whose work as a rule was of an inferior description. One work, indeed, is worthy of special mention because of its historical interest. In 1535 the first edition of Coverdale's Bible was issued, and Holbein designed for it the title-page in which, at the bottom, Henry VIII. appears seated on a throne in the act of handing the Bible to the bishops and nobles of his realm. David and Paul are his supporters on either side. Smaller subjects, Adam and Eve, the Resurrection, the Charge of Christ to the Apostles, etc., are engraved around the margin. The same title-page was employed again in the next edition of Coverdale's Bible.

Three illustrations to Cranmer's "Catechism," a portrait of Nicholas Bourbon, and twenty subjects of the Passion of Christ, which, however, have disappeared from knowledge, are amongst the chief remaining woodcuts which Holbein designed for English publication. He does not appear to have felt the same zest for this kind of work, even if his multifarious duties as Court painter had left him time for it, as in his early days. It is by the work of those early days at Basel that his fame as a draughtsman upon wood must always rest.



TITLE-PAGE TO COVERDALE'S BIBLE, 1535



CHAPTER XXI

THE DANCE OF DEATH

NO one who is familiar with German art of all periods will fail to have recognized a certain grimness of characteristic which runs throughout it from first to last, and which from Dürer to Böcklin displays itself in the fondness of its artists for dealing with the personification of Death. Holbein was no creator of this subject; he merely entered into the common heritage of his race. He found it already an ancient subject which had long exercised its strange fascination in the "Danses Macabres," the true "Dances of Death" which on the walls of church or cloister acted as a *memento mori* of a very striking shape to the minds of men. The fondness for this kind of representation was, of course, not confined to Germany. A "Dance of Death" is known to have existed before Holbein's day in the cloister of the Innocents at Paris, and the "Vision of Death" in the Campo Santo at Pisa will readily occur to every mind. But nowhere did the fancy take so deep a hold as in Germany. There are few of her artists of that date who avoided the subject. Albrecht Dürer (in his "Knight and Death" and in his "Death and the Lady"), Martin Schongauer, Hans Baldung Grün, Urs Graf, and many another were allured by the subject and treated it in paint or on copper. Perhaps the most typical instance of all, however, is to be found in a picture by Hans Burgkmair in the Vienna Gallery of himself and his wife, in which the wife, a young woman in full brightness and beauty, is made to hold before her face a mirror in which is reflected, not her own young face, but that of a grinning Death. It would be hardly possible to quote a more expressive instance of the type of the German mind of that time, nor one which marks more distinctly the difference of thought in that day and country from our own conceptions of Love and Life and Love and Death.

Holbein therefore finds his theme already a commonplace of art, very familiar to the minds of his countrymen. At Basel there existed in the cloisters of the Dominican convent a celebrated "Dance of Death," which did not disappear till late in the eighteenth century. That was a true "Dance of Death," a "Danse Macabre" of the accepted type, in which each man or woman was partnered by a skeleton. It is needless to say that the title has been incorrectly transferred to Holbein's series, which was not so named when it was first published. Time has, however, so

sanctioned the use of the title that it would be mere pedantry to attempt now to set it aside. The history of this set of woodcuts has only become clear after an amount of controversy which has lasted a full century and has created a literature of its own.

The set of forty-one small woodcuts was first published at Lyons in 1538, by the brothers Kaspar and Melchior Trechsel, under the title of "Les Simulachres de la Mort," prefaced by an address to the "moult reverende abbesse du religieux couvent S. Pierre de Lyons Joanne Touszele salut d'un Vray Zele." One might have suspected that both these personages were fictitious, but for the statement which Woltmann vouchsafes that Vray Zele is identical with Jean de Vauzelles, a poet and man of learning of the time who commonly wrote under the style of "Vray Zelles." The preface is, doubtless of set purpose, obscure and misleading. The little book was evidently put forth tentatively, without the name of either artist or engraver, until the public pulse could be felt. The dedication contains an allusion to the artist which is intentionally equivocal. It says that owing to the death of the artist (who of course has to be compared with Zeuxis and Apelles) the set remains incomplete, since no one would dare to lay his hand to that which such an artist had left unfinished. Now this cannot refer to Holbein, who was alive, but must refer to the wood-engraver, who was dead. In one of the series, namely, the "Duchess," occurs the signature H. L. on the couch upon which she is sitting. And this signature is now generally accepted as that of Hans Lützelburger. This identity has been established by the fact that in the "Alphabet of Death," from Holbein's design, there is inserted a little placard bearing the inscription, "Hanns Leuczelberger genannt Franck formschneider." If that "Alphabet of Death" be placed side by side with the proof series of the "Dance of Death," the identity of style in the cutting coupled with the signature above mentioned will carry conviction to the reader.

Hans Lützelburger was dead before June, 1526. That, with the fact that he signed his initials to a certain number of woodcuts, is all that we know of a wood-engraver whose work, in its own line, has never been surpassed. Up to the present time all attempts to realize his personality in a more tangible shape have ended in failure. It has been held that he is identical with a Hans Franck whose name is found at Augsburg, and, if this be correct, then it would seem probable that he had followed the example of Holbein and had migrated to Basel. The view, however, has not found general acceptance any more than that other view which would identify him with a Hans Franck whose name is found in the book of the Guild zum Himmel at Basel. That a man of such ability as the engraver of the "Dance of Death" should be unknown to us save as a name is one of those mysteries, such as that which we have already noted in the youth of



THE ALPHABET OF DEATH

(BRITISH MUSEUM)

Holbein himself, which confront us from time to time in the history of art. Here, however, I am by no means without hope that the blank may yet be filled by the discovery of fresh evidence, and that the last word has not yet been spoken on the life and the work of the engraver Hans Lützelburger.

We are left, however, at present with these solitary facts—that Lützelburger was dead in 1526, before which time he had cut and taken proofs of the blocks which subsequently appeared in the first edition of "*Les Simulachres de la Mort*," published at Lyons in 1538 by the brothers Trechsel. We have to ask ourselves two questions—first, what was the reason for the delay of at least twelve years? and, secondly, what were the circumstances that at last led to the publication of the "*Dance of Death*" in that same year?

The delay can be explained without much difficulty by reference to the unsettled condition of religious and social opinion in Basel in the years preceding Lützelburger's death. In 1524, as we have seen, the Basel government issued a veto upon the publication of all controversial matter in their city—a wholesome prohibition enough, it must be admitted. It seems to me that the date of that veto suggests the fact that the "*Dance of Death*" series had already been drawn on the wood by Holbein and had been partly cut by Lützelburger, since it is not probable that the work would have been entered upon *de novo* in the face of that veto. On the other hand, if it had been already commenced when the edict was issued, we can understand that it should have been carried forward in the hopes of a more favourable day for its publication thereafter. It is true that strictly there is nothing controversial in the "*Dance of Death*." The fact that emperors and kings, popes and abbots, bishops and nuns, are all mortal, as well as the old wife and the huckster, the ploughman and the ship's-boy, is scarcely a matter which involves controversy or touches any religious question. There had, indeed, been a day when Dante might put his ecclesiastics into the "*Inferno*," and when a bishop or a monk or two more or less on the wrong side in Orcagna's "*Last Judgement*" gave no offence, but rather added a flavour to his work. There had been no burning question in that day. But the ground was more treacherous beneath the feet of Holbein in the Basel of his time. Moreover, there are more ways than one of expressing even so obvious a truth as the universality of Death, and it must be owned that Holbein's way of saying it had a certain sting in it. There is no actual offence to Church or to ecclesiastic in the "*Dance of Death*"—if we except, perhaps, the woodcut of the "*Nun*"—but one can readily understand that John Froben or any Basel publisher might hold aloof from a publication which, if sent out at that moment, might have been seen through the eyes of controversy. When Holbein returned from his first English journey the position was worse rather than better. One may

suppose that he himself possessed a set of the proofs, possibly was the actual owner of the blocks—we have no information on this point—and when in 1538 he came over on his mission to Burgundy it is very probable that he visited Lyons and there made arrangements with the Trechsels (or Frellon, who seems to have been the true owner of the printing business) for the transfer to them of the blocks of the "Dance of Death," and also of the ninety-five Bible cuts which they published in that same year. It may be urged that since Holbein's visit took place in August or September of that year, the remaining months do not allow time enough for the production of the work. But it must be remembered that beyond the dedication, and the few lines of exposition under each cut, there was no literary work to be done and very little type to be set up, and the mere printing of the blocks and the issue of so simple a form of book as the first edition of the "Dance of Death" would be no great tax on a printing firm.¹

There was still, even in 1538, an evident nervousness on the part of the publishers. I hold, as already suggested, that the obscure utterances of the dedication concerning the artist are not accidental or of ignorance, but of deliberate intention, and that the statement that the person who had "imagined" (*imaginé*—a word capable of double interpretation) these drawings was dead, was an intentional confusion put forth to lead the adversary off the scent in case the cuts should be received with hostility. It must not be forgotten that if they had been issued under the name of Holbein, known to be Court painter to Henry VIII., the recent destroyer of the monasteries, a prejudice might at once have been created before the book had been even issued or had any chance of obtaining a circulation on its own merits. In later editions, when it had become evident that the drawings were looked upon with favour, all disguise is laid aside, and the authorship of the designs is attributed frankly to Holbein.

This series of forty-one small engravings should be studied only in one of the proof sets, but, with that condition, they cannot be studied too carefully. They contain in themselves most of the great qualities of Holbein's art, his largeness of seeing, his clearness of expression, his unequalled power of saying what he has to say without a word too much or too little, above all, his masterly dramatic power. To sustain the interest of the drama through forty-one subjects² in which the central thought has

¹ Froben in an address to his readers in one of his books, I am unable to remember which, expressly says that the preparation and printing of the book had occupied only a few weeks. At that period there were probably very few books on the hands of a publisher at the same moment.

² I may here express the opinion that the eleven additional cuts which appear in the 1545 and subsequent editions are, with the exception of the "Waggoner," not designed by Holbein, as it is generally supposed, but are designed to correspond as nearly as possible with his style by another artist.

THE DANCE OF DEATH

BRITISH MUSEUM

Die Schöpfung aller dinge.



Adam Eva im Paradyß.



Vstirbung Ade Eue.



Adam bangt die erden.



Gebeyn aller menschen.



Der Papst.



THE DANCE OF DEATH

BRITISH MUSEUM

Der Keyser.



Der König.



Der Cardinal.



Die Keyserinn.



Die Königin.



Der Bischoff.



always to be the same, without ever allowing it to become monotonous, or stale, or commonplace, is a task which very few men—I almost think no man save Holbein—would have accomplished successfully. The tax upon the inventive resources would have left most men bankrupt before half the series had been completed. But it may be said that from first to last the interest never flags. Each subject is a complete picture by itself, a tragedy of life told amidst the exact surroundings which belong to the chief actor, bishop, knight, or nun, and which would be in each case comparatively meaningless if the surroundings were transferred. Each detail is made to do its part clearly and quite naturally, and to do, moreover, a double part, helping to tell a plain story in all clearness and at the same time serving a distinct artistic end. The scale of the drawings is so small that many of the little objects which tell their tale in each scene so truly are hardly the twentieth of an inch in length. Yet they are drawn broadly; they never are confused or of doubtful meaning. You do not need a magnifying glass to understand them. You can even tell as you look at some of the subjects how much sand there is left to run down in the hour glass which is somewhere to be found in almost every print of the series.

Holbein was, however, under no temptation to allow these matters to distract the thoughts either of himself or of the spectator from the central action of the piece. He had set himself several minor problems to answer in his handling of these little masterpieces, and to none did he deny its due share of attention. He had first of all to look to his mere composition—that is to say, so to arrange the little figures within the oblong bounding lines of the plate that they should fill the space pleasantly to the eye. He had to make each little detail of the very minute drawing tell its tale at sight. He had to give to each figure and face its own fitting expression, and that with such unerring distinctness and simplicity that the woodcutter—for even Hans Lützelburger was human—could not mistake it or cut it away. All these were the minor issues which he had to meet, yet not one of them could he afford to neglect. But still less could he afford to allow one of them to assert itself at the expense of the central thought of each little subject. If he failed in that one thing, namely, to keep that thought central, he had failed in all things. If he allowed anything to interfere with the one prevailing master thought, his little pieces, in spite of his own drawing and design, and in spite of Lützelburger's craft, would have fallen back into a place not much higher than the hundred other treatments of a similar theme which the German school of engravers have given us. And so completely is he absorbed in this determination to make Death the dramatic centre of each piece that he seems, as I have already had to point out, indifferent to mere anatomical accuracy provided he can make his skeleton live and move and be real. It would seem to have been

an easy thing enough for Holbein—we have not forgotten the “Dead Christ” at Basel—to have obtained absolute anatomical accuracy if he had needed it. But it is more to him that he shall make these dead bones live, in the true sense, by their movement, expression, vivid reality of horror, than that the correct number of ribs should be there or that radius and ulna should be exactly defined. And as a matter of fact there is not one instance in which the skeleton is scientifically accurate. Death is made to walk about with a tibia only and no fibula, and with a quite impossible pelvis. Holbein throws away these truths, one is almost surprised to find, but he does not throw away the greater truths. The Death is always real, always dramatic, quite unforgettable. He is perfectly natural in all his action, perfectly human, perfectly living, if we may so say, and he never degenerates to the mere grotesque, as happens so often in the work of the minor men. For Death must be natural in his action and in his share in the scene, else there would be loss of dramatic force. It is just because Death comes in the middle of all men’s natural pursuits that the tragedy of life is never-ending. Death is made, therefore, in each case to throw himself perfectly naturally into the action of each separate victim. He comes always as a mocker, playing the part of the victim with grim ironical assent. He never contradicts the action of the piece. When the Pope holds out the crown to the kneeling monarch and gives him his toe to kiss, Death stands by and bows with mocking pomp. He struts before the wedded couple and beats his tattoo on the zither with all the abandon of a reveller. But he grabs at the gold of the miser, since the miser has done that same all his days. He runs the knight through with his own spear, but he steals up to the old man as he creeps upon his way and quietly lays his hand upon him, while he simply blows out the candle on the altar where the nun should have been praying. He marches ostentatiously before the priest with his bell and his lantern, and he stalks in the furrow beside the ploughman and helps him flog forward his weary team. It is the consummate ease with which this unity of motive between Death and Life is kept up throughout the scenes that makes each one of them a perfectly balanced work of art. He stops always short of the grotesque, always short of the repulsive. He succeeds in making each one of the scenes just as true and as real to our sense as if there were indeed a visible personal Death which went in and out amongst men upon his errand. If such there were, he would certainly go about it thus, as Holbein shows him.

Holbein has the instinct of a Shakespeare in proportioning his tragic strength to the needs of his subject so rightly that there is no sense of overstraining or exaggeration. There is no tearing of a passion to rags. Like him, too, he disposes his material, which is always of the simplest, so that it shall produce its fullest result. He goes straight to the root of the

THE DANCE OF DEATH
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Der Hertzog.



Der Apt.



Die Apfikon.



Der Edelman.



Der Thamberr.



Der Richter.



THE DANCE OF DEATH
BRITISH MUSEUM

Der Fürspräch.



Der Ratsherr.



Der Predicant.



Der Pflerherr.



Der Münch.



Die Nünne.



matter. It all seems to happen as the real tragedies of life do happen, as a matter of course. Death takes his place in everybody's life as a part and parcel of it. Holbein sees the dramatic force of that fact, and sees, too, that nothing can be more dramatic.

Technically these little woodcuts—the result of an alliance between a great designer and a great woodcutter—are as good as they can be. Each of the two men seems to have known exactly what was necessary for the other. Perhaps there is no finer instance of the result of this artistic sympathy than the cut known as “Der Ackermann,” the ploughman, in which the landscape, under the setting sun,¹ rendered in the simplest fashion by purely conventional lines, expresses itself as feelingly as the richest chiaroscuro could have done. But the landscape in “Der Bischoff,” the bishop, is scarcely less masterly.

“Der Rychmann,” again, is a strikingly beautiful bit of wood-engraving achieved by the simplest means. It is to be noticed that the lines are everywhere kept open, crosshatching being entirely avoided in the greater number of the cuts, and used very sparingly even in those where it occurs at all. I have only found it in some seven or eight of the series of proofs, and most of all in “Der Münch,” the monk. It is, by the way, interesting to see that in the woodcut of “Der Kunig” Holbein places his king, as in the “Rehoboam” design for the Rathaus wall painting at Basel, under a canopy whose curtain is decked with the fleur-de-lys. When Holbein at that date wished to represent a typical king his mind turned towards Francis I., as evidently as it did towards Maximilian, now dead and gone, for his kaiser.

The list of the chief early editions of the “Dance of Death” given below will show the sequence of the early editions. The ultimate fate of the original woodblocks is uncertain. Probably many of the blocks of this small size, with very delicate and expressive cutting, were worn out at a comparatively early date, since it is stated that in the Antwerp edition of 1554, sixteen of the prints are from the original blocks (having probably drifted there as secondhand goods). I do not know on what evidence this statement is made, and I have not myself seen a copy of the edition in question, but presumably it rests upon the superior quality of these sixteen prints and on their exact correspondence with the cuts of the same subject in the sets of proof impressions. And if the statement is correct, it evidently points to the fact that the complete set, owing to wear and tear, had been broken up or sold, a few only being found in such condition as fitted them for further service.

¹ This cut should be compared with the effect of light in the cut known as “Christ the True Light,” of which a fine impression is in the British Museum Print Room.

CHIEF EARLY EDITIONS OF THE "DANCE OF DEATH."

Proof impressions probably taken during Lützelburger's lifetime are found in the British Museum, the Paris Library, the Berlin Print Room, the Basel Museum, and the Carlsruhe Cabinet. Two sets exist in the British Museum; the first, formerly in Mr. Ottley's collection, lacks only the "Astrologer," as also does the set in the Museum of Basel. The second set, from the Mitchell collection, lacks several proofs which have been supplied from later editions.

1st Lyon Edition, 1538, 4to. *Les Simulachres et Historiees Faces de la Mort.* 41 cuts. Kaspar and Melchior Trechsel, with preface by Vray Zele. Texts of scripture above the cuts in Latin, verses below in French.

2nd Lyon Edition, 1542, 12mo. Similar to the first, but published by John and Francis Frellon.

3rd Lyon Edition, 1542, 12mo. *Imagines Mortis.* John and Francis Frellon. The verses below in Latin; a tailpiece, not by Holbein, of a lame beggar.

4th Lyon Edition, 1547, 12mo. *Imagines Mortis.* John Frellon (alone). Contains 11 additional cuts besides the lame beggar, or 53 cuts in all.

5th Lyon Edition, 1547, 12mo. *Icones Mortis.* John Frellon. Similar to 4th Edition.

6th Lyon Edition, 1547, 12mo. *Les Images de la Mort.* Jean Frellon. 53 cuts.

7th Lyon Edition, 1549, 12mo. *Simolachri historie e figure de la Morte.* Giovan Frellone. 53 cuts.

8th Lyon Edition, 1562, 12mo. *Les Images de la Mort.* Jehan Frellon. 58 cuts (the authorship of the additional five is not recognized).

9th Lyon Edition, 1574, 12mo. *Imagines Mortis.* Frellonius.

In 1545, a pirated Edition was issued at Venice, of which Frellon complains in his 1549 Edition.

In 1544, an edition, 4to, "Todtentanz," was issued at Augsburg by Jobst Dienecker.

In 1554, 12mo. "Icones Mortis," with no printer's name, was issued at Basel.

This list is compiled from T. F. Dibdin's "Dance of Death," G. Bell and Sons, 1896, and from Chatto's "History of Wood-engraving," Henry Bohn, 1861.

THE DANCE OF DEATH
BRITISH MUSEUM

Daß Altweyb.



Der Artzet.



Der Rych mann.



Der Kauffman.



Der Schiffman.



THE DANCE OF DEATH
BRITISH MUSEUM

Der Ritter.



Der Grog.



Der Alt man.



Die Gressinn.



Die Edelfrau.



Die Hertzoginn.



THE DANCE OF DEATH

BRITISH MUSEUM

Der Krämer.



Der Ackerman.



Das Kind.



Das künfft gericht.



Die wagen des Thotß.



CHAPTER XXII

HOLBEIN'S DESIGNS FOR THE HANDICRAFTS

IN devoting one of these last chapters of the book to the work of Holbein as a designer for the handicrafts I have chosen a method which is the most convenient, but which has in it a danger which I should especially desire to avoid, of leaving the impression that this kind of work stood in any way apart from, or can be considered separately from his whole artistic career and occupation. So far from that being the fact, his artistic temperament engaged itself at every moment of the life as we know it in every form of human production into which art can enter as a coherent portion of its essence. He lived and thought of himself, and others thought of him, not merely as painter, but rather as artist. Handicraftsman we can hardly call him, since he did not, so far as can be proved, employ his own hand in working in the actual material in which his designs for silver or gold, or steel or leather, plaster or wood, were to be carried out. In this, therefore, he differed from the painter craftsmen of Italy, from Francia, Pollajuolo, Verrocchio, Cellini, who both designed and wrought out their own designs in its final material. For Holbein lived at an age in Germany when the separation between designer and craftsman had already begun, to the loss, beyond all question, of the true vitality of the craft and the true spirit of the craftsman. Holbein was from his earliest days amongst the workshops of Augsburg, steeped in interests in all the crafts. He knew their needs and understood their technics accurately, and he had learnt all that there was to learn about them, short of the actual skill and practice of hand that was needed in their production, before he left Augsburg. To some extent this knowledge shielded him from the disasters and banalities which commonly result to men who design for crafts which they themselves do not practice. Yet even where a designer of the power and of the instinct of Holbein can be obtained, and even where designer and craftsman work together in such sympathy as, for example, Holbein and Hans of Antwerp, yet it is impossible to doubt that the result must suffer sooner or later by the absence of that vital quality in the designer's mind which seems to pass, by some hidden sympathy, from designer to material, so that the thing designed, even if the design be very humble, partakes in some mysterious manner of the life and the being of the designer.

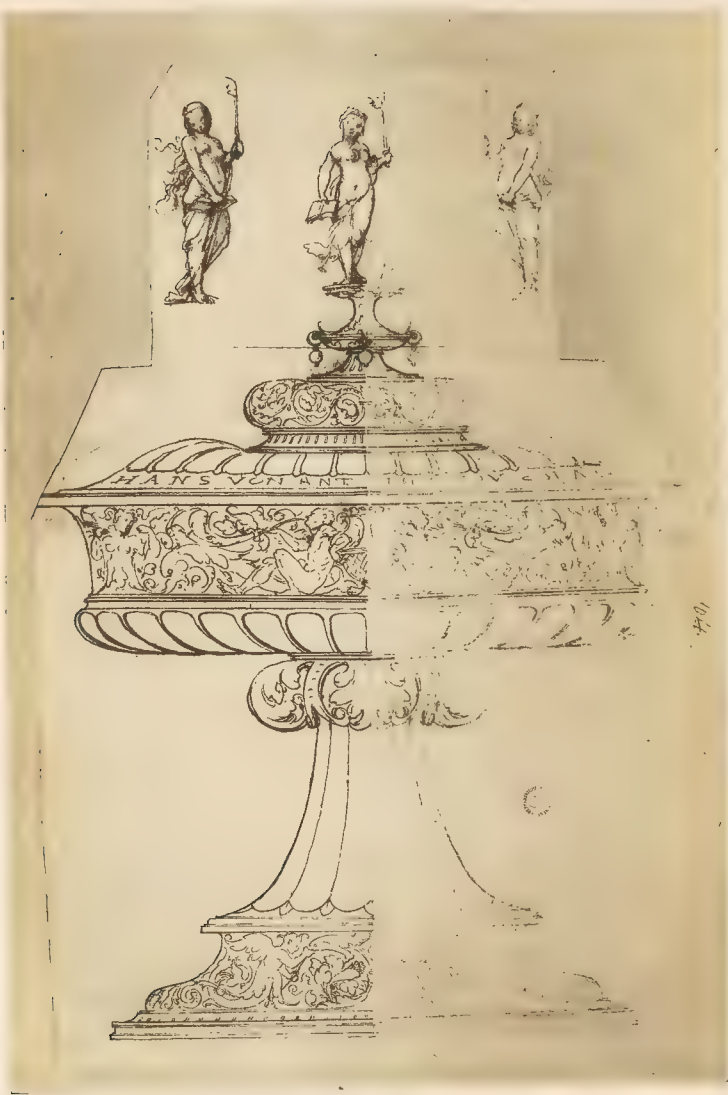
Already in Holbein's day the applied arts of Germany had set out

upon a course which, though for the next century it seemed to be exalting them to the very heavens, was destined at no long time after to leave Germany with artists who could no longer design and craftsmen who could no longer produce anything beyond the pretentious show pieces which we now see in the cases of the great museums of Europe. During the fifteenth century¹ the goldsmith's craft of Germany, when craftsman and designer were still one, preserved much of that reverence for beauty which grows out of a love for simplicity of form, coupled with the instinct of loyalty towards the materials which they were using. Beautiful shape, sincerity to the professed purpose of the object, sound but not ostentatious workmanship, and a certain reticence and self-suppression, had been the aims of the earlier craftsmen, and these aims had not been wholly laid aside when the fifteenth century had ended and the sixteenth had run some thirty years of its course. But from that time forward the goldsmith's art of Germany, growing every day more assertive of its astounding skill, tended to mere achievements of technical skill and dexterity. The plate produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the workers of Nuremberg and Augsburg enjoys a great reputation with collectors, and it brought in the day of its production unrivalled commercial prosperity to the crafts of those towns. It was not the first nor the last time in the history of arts and crafts that ostentatious dexterity was to delude people out of their natural sense of the beautiful. But if the reader will take the trouble, when opportunity offers, to conduct an experiment or two among the great collections of German plate which are to be seen in the National Museums of Berlin and Munich, in the Ambras Collection at Vienna, and above all in the Green Vaults at Dresden, he will justify me in my statement. Let him, as a first experiment, go without catalogue, and without examining labels, through, let us say, to take one convenient example, the splendid collection of the Green Vaults, searching for such cups and vessels as satisfy his eye and earn his affection by simple beauties of shape and proportion. When he has faithfully selected his specimens let him turn to the labels, and he will find that in almost every case the piece bears date before the year 1530, and that in proportion as the pieces go beyond that mark they seem to increase in extravagance of shape as much as in the astonishing dexterity of the workmanship. Let him then try a second experiment in that collection or elsewhere, by making selection by a similar method of all the cups and other objects which are absolutely adapted to the use for which they are ostensibly designed, disqualifying all those whose use is interfered with by the insertion of some dexterously devised excrescence or ornament. He will find the dates coincide fairly well again with those of his previous experiment.

¹ Among the Holbein drawings in the British Museum is a design of great beauty for a cup attributed to Hans Holbein the father.

CUP DESIGNED FOR HANS OF ANTWERP

BASEL



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The danger which always lay just ahead of the German craftsman was that which we have noticed in the opening chapter of this book on German painting. The patience, perseverance, and thoroughness of the German led him to set a justly high value on the perfection of workmanship to which these virtues both entitled and led him. Once obtained, there was always the danger that this same skill should entice him forward into further fields of achievement and of dexterity. Every fresh feat of minute and miraculous craftsmanship meant one more difficulty conquered. It has always been the besetting sin which grew out of his very virtue, that he never knew where to stop. And when once the mere accomplishment of feats of dexterity as such becomes an acknowledged virtue, art has passed out of the region where it wins us through our affections into the regions where it merely arrests us by means of our surprise. That fate speedily overtook the goldsmith's art of Germany. Certain amenities of form, based mainly on the shapes which accompany the everlasting pine-apple pattern, do not disappear, but they are too often lost or interrupted by the intrusion of distracting details of ornament. Thus, in a collection at Dresden composed almost entirely of masterpieces of the German craftsmen who worked after the middle of the sixteenth century, I have found few examples of drinking cups whose primary use was not made difficult and their symmetry obscured by the insertion of some wholly unsuitable device into the stem. The vessel may stand on a shapely and well-designed foot, but as the stem runs up to do its honest purpose of affording both a grace to the eye and a grasp for the hand, it suddenly encounters a huntsman, or a nymph, or a goddess, who is palpably inadequate to support the weight above, and whose obtrusive angularities are destined to catch in the fingers of the would-be drinker, or else eventually to be rubbed down into subjection by the wear and tear of use. The lids by a similar perversity are commonly covered with small plumes of involved ornament which has often degenerated into filigree. In the Green Vaults at Dresden I have not after careful examination found even one of all the gorgeous show pieces which are there set forth, in which a cup could be grasped comfortably by its stem so that it might be used to drink out of. In most cases the hand would find absolutely no grip, while in other cases the stem could be held, but in so doing the hand would rub away the finely chased or twisted metal, so that if the real use of the object were for a very short time insisted on the design would be obliterated. Here you have the deadliest foe to all applied art.

And any really important collection, public or private, of German goldsmith's work in its most flourishing period will always be found to be full of those achievements, those successes which are the chiefest failures in art—chiefest failures because they teach how absolutely it is written that no skill, no craftsman's magic, is of any avail to hold of itself the love and

affection of men. That can be held only by the presence of love and affection in the thing wrought, whether it be building or sculpture, picture or jewellery, iron or lace, or what not, that man or woman makes. There is often more that holds and endears in the rude but loving work of some old Norwegian peasant, made long ago by the light of his wood fire, than there is in the gorgeous and over-wrought splendours which some Augsburg craftsman made for some emperor or king. The craftsman is forgotten, the king but half remembered: the peasant, and those for whose eyes he worked, are forgotten also; but as one looks at his simple carved mangleboard with its quaint fondness it awakes in us a curious feeling of pleasure and affection. Did anyone not a collector ever feel moved by the tankards, the ewers, the exhibition pieces of sixteenth-century Germans in the Green Vaults, or in South Kensington, at Munich, or at Berlin? It may, of course, be answered that since the majority of these works were in effect never intended to be used, but were admittedly produced as mere objects of exhibition and of luxury, it is pedantry to utter a general condemnation against a development of art which has departed from principles which it no longer needed. The answer is quite just so far as it concerns the exculpation of any individual worker within that period, but it does not exculpate the art itself from the charge of having severed itself from the needs of mankind which first gave it birth, and which alone will give it healthy continuance. The applied art which accepts for itself such a position condemns itself from that moment to separation from the sympathies of life that it may find its grave in the museum case or the collector's cabinet.

The condemnations written above do not apply in their most sweeping form to the designs for goldsmith's and silversmith's work which Hans Holbein made. The exuberance of his fancy and the astonishing fertility of his invention were kept in check to a great extent by the strong sense of proportion and the dignified sense of beauty which imposed upon him at all times its own unconscious limitations. One or two of the drawings which he has left behind him for cups—one may mention especially the drawing at Basel for the cup which bears the name of Hans of Antwerp—are of simple and stately outline, in which the proportion of parts form the first element of the design, and in which the added ornament (in which no doubt Holbein chiefly exulted) does not deprive one of the original pleasure which the symmetry of shape conveyed. A drawing for another cup in the same collection—which may be recognized by the small figure of a woman holding a shield with which the lid is crowned—is perhaps in point of symmetry and proportion even more satisfying. It is needless to say that the little drawings which are made to full scale for the chasings of these or of other cups are delightful to look upon as mere drawings. The charm of Holbein's hand is never wanting from any of these sheets. What we have to ask

JANE SEYMOUR'S CUP

BRITISH MUSEUM



rather is whether, when they were carried out in silver, especially by another hand, the charm could be preserved. There are few things in which it is more easy to be deceived than in our judgement upon designs on paper for work to be carried out in solid material. One must endeavour to put aside the inevitable temptation to be misled by all that makes a mere drawing delicious as such, and one must throw the mind forward as it were into the final result in another material, and, as unhappily was the case with Holbein's designs, carried out by another hand. Nothing can be more charming than the delicate, graceful, and enticing little sketches which abound amongst Holbein's designs for the handicrafts.

It is an unhappy fact that we have no completed work surviving out of all which Holbein thus projected which we can assign without question to his design. In the great collections of College and Company plate are pieces which are traditionally assigned to him, and which carry some of the characteristics which we associate with his name. In no case, so far as I am aware, can the attribution be verified by any reference to an existing design or to contemporary and trustworthy document. We are compelled here, as in the case of the wall paintings, to fall back upon such designs from his hand as we find amongst his drawings.

The best known of these are the two designs which exist, the one at the Bodleian, Oxford, and the other in the British Museum,¹ for a cup for Jane Seymour. The cup itself has disappeared, probably in the troubled days of the Civil War, during which so much of the earlier plate in the homes of the noble and the rich was cast into the melting-pot to provide sinews for the war. The cup was still in the royal treasury in 1625, and is thus described: "Item a faire standing cup of gould garnished about the cover with eleven dyamonds and two pointed dyamonds about the cupp seaventeene Table dyamonds and one pearle pendent upon the cupp with theis words 'Bound to obey and serve' and H and I knitt together: in the Topp of the cover the queens armes an queene Janes armes houden by twoe boys under a crowne Imperiall weighing threescore and five ounces and a halfe." It is needless to say that a gold cup which weighed sixty-five ounces stood but a poor chance of long survival in the days of Charles I.

We are easily able to recognize in the drawing several, though not all of the features described in the inventory—Jane Seymour's motto, "Bound to obey and to serve," thrice repeated; the "H and I knitt together," and the boys holding up the blank shield (on which the arms have not yet been figured) and the "crowne Imperiall." What has become of the six pearl pendants which we see in the drawing, and of which only one is mentioned in the description, we cannot explain. Nor do the jewels with which the

¹ The British Museum drawing is not necessarily from Hans Holbein's hand.

original drawing is studded strike us as diamonds. It is of course possible that the cup in the hands of the craftsman, probably Hans of Antwerp, underwent modification. Probably the portrait of the queen which we see in relief on the drawing was omitted, since it is a feature which would assuredly have been mentioned in the inventory if it had been present on the actual cup. Setting aside for a moment all the appeal to principles with which this chapter commenced, we have here a drawing of the very greatest beauty, which before it is transferred to metal fills the eye by its sense of proportion, and does not offend us by the overcrowding of its ornament, because as a matter of fact the artist has treated it rather as a drawing of a beautiful cup which he had seen or held in his mind's eye than as a stern and prosaic guide to the man who was to finally carry it out. One can imagine that the Bodleian drawing was made to submit to the king and to Jane rather than for Hans of Antwerp. It is by the way worthy of remark that on the Bodleian drawing is found the signature, but not I imagine in Holbein's own hand, "Hans Holbein Inv. Fecit," which would seem to mean that Hans Holbein designed and made the cup, a statement which cannot be accepted, since the carrying out of such a work would have occupied many months in a year (1537) in which we know that his hands were more than full with the Whitehall fresco, the portrait of Jane Seymour, and other works, even if there were any kind of evidence that Holbein ever put his hand to the goldsmith's craft. Possibly the words may be intended merely to imply that the drawing was made by Holbein's own hand.

If we turn our thoughts from this very enjoyable drawing to the cup itself as it took its final shape under the hand of the gold-worker, we may perhaps be in doubt whether the realization of the design in gold could, apart from all questions of magnificence of material, have been so delightful to the eye as the drawing itself. Much, of course, must have depended on the sympathy between designer and craftsman, and more still must have depended on the feeling and the power of the latter. It is vain, however, to speculate further. In a drawing by Cellini we at least have the guarantee that the skill of the craftsman would not fall behind the feeling of the design—the fear lies wholly in the other direction. In a drawing by Holbein we are compelled to take this assurance on trust.

It is needless to point out the bearing of my preliminary remarks on such a design as that which we have before us when we consider it with reference to its fitness for its supposed purpose. That purpose doubtless was non-existent. No person probably ever attempted to drink out of Jane Seymour's cup. If they had done so they would have been in no small degree perplexed by the difficulty of knowing where to catch hold of it without interfering with the pendent pearls and other excrescent

TWO DESIGNS FOR DAGGERS

BRITISH MUSEUM



features. The cup passed soon to its rest among a king's treasures, to await its inevitable fate.

A number of designs for dagger handles and sheaths, to be carried out either by the armourer or the goldsmith—for it is difficult to define where the duties of either began and ended—are to be found at Basel and in the British Museum, and in other public and private collections. These objects offered to Holbein a rich opportunity for the indulgence of his fancy. The designs as we see them on paper are of very great beauty, and although the friezes which he often employs for the decoration of the long face of the sheath are full of figures, a certain largeness of treatment which never deserts him even when he works on so small a scale preserves the design from overcrowding or confusion. The most satisfactory of the designs for this purpose are undoubtedly those in which he has employed Renaissance ornament only, to the omission of figures. An extremely fine example of this kind is to be found on Sheet 73 among the drawings at Basel (bearing date 1529), while on the same sheet is to be found a design for a dagger in which a true dance of death, skeletons footing it with knights and lords and ladies, is naturalistically employed. One may admit the suitability of the subject to the purpose of the dagger, while at the same time one sees how such a treatment suffers as mere decoration in comparison with the other example. One or two very fine designs for daggers are in the British Museum Print Room, one of which is for the boldness and shapeliness of its form very desirable as a work of art, but carries upon itself the reproach that the projecting ornaments of its handle would make it extremely difficult to hold. Once again the reader must apply his own sense of adjustment in remembering that the dagger of full dress life at that period had as much ceased to be a weapon of utility as the sword of the Lord Mayor or the Lord Lieutenant in this.

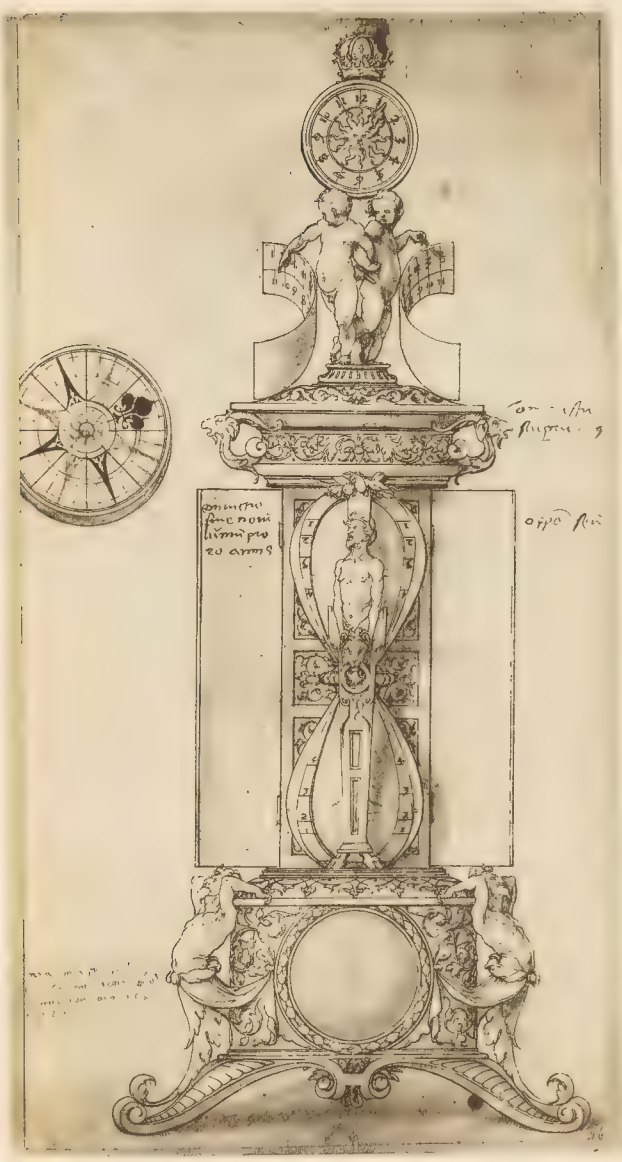
A large number of designs for jewellery, for niello ornaments, shoe-buckles, buttons, and clasps are also found in various collections—Chatsworth possessing a fine set—while the British Museum alone possesses a sufficient number to enable us to judge fully of the spirit of Holbein's design in a branch of handicraft which obviously had great attractions for him. For no one who is familiar with his portraits can fail to be aware that there is no detail of costume which he attacks with more evident delight and renders with whole-hearted sympathy than the jewellery which in that age, and especially in England, added so great a charm to the rich apparel of men and women. Foreign critics found fault with English ladies of the day for too great extravagance in this respect. That the taste for personal adornment ran high in Tudor days in our country is a fact that is established by the many portraits other than those of Holbein which unmistakably assert the fact.

The particular style of jewellery in which Holbein delighted was not created by him. It existed in England before his day, as we may see from portraits—such, for example, as the “Queen Mary” at Oxford and the “Mary Carew” (once Boleyn) at Longford, and others—painted before the time when Holbein had made his footing good in Court circles. And the refined yet sumptuous beauty of the jewellery which we are able upon this evidence to attribute to craftsmen in England in early Tudor days, though it did not probably originate in England, but was brought across to us by Flemish jewellers who had settled in London, had evidently captivated Holbein, who in his own designs merely adds to it that personal note which runs throughout all his inventions.

No designs by him for any form of craft are more thoroughly enjoyable than these. We are freed, as we look at them, from all conscientious necessity of inquiring whether they suffer any disability from being unfitted for the purpose of their use. Jewellery such as this has but one use, the causing of delight to the eye. In this case ornament is the end in itself. You have merely to ask whether it is truly beautiful, that is to say, whether the designer has so understood and sympathized with his materials, gold or precious stone, or pearl or enamel, that the design in which he has enclosed them has brought out the full beauty of which they are capable, or has he by some failure of instinct merely vulgarized his material by unmeaning display? A practical form of answer may be found by placing a page of these designs side by side with one of designs for similar jewellery by Cellini, the comparison, remember, extending merely to the designs on paper, no comparison between the ultimate craftsmanship being just or possible. The refinement, the reticence, and the true sense of reverence for the beauty of his material will turn out in this case to be on the side of the Northern designer, the occasionally garrulous expression of his own power of manipulation showing itself rather on the part of the great Italian.

Among the Holbein designs are a few which are based upon the fashion prevailing largely in England at that date, and of which a good example is to be found in the portrait, not by Holbein, of Anne Boleyn at the National Portrait Gallery. The queen wears a pendant in which the letter B forms the most conspicuous object, the square lines of the Roman letter compelling a rectangular treatment of design which lends itself well to a dignified and satisfying continuation of line, which is broken and relieved by the curves of a jewel or a pearl. A brooch which bears the initials R.E. among Holbein's designs is a very beautiful instance of this type of design, which was probably carried out in enamel. Several of the designs are touched with colour to indicate the use of this material. In the R.E. brooch three pendent pearls complete the design, and it may be noticed throughout that Holbein shows a great fondness for the use of large pearls, which, both by

DESIGN FOR A TIMEPIECE
THE LAST KNOWN DRAWING BY HOLBEIN, 1543
BRITISH MUSEUM



omni
pau
rom
limp
to arm

om - i
supra . 9

otto rei

omni
pau
rom
limp
to arm

their colour and their shape lend themselves to such lovely combinations in the jeweller's art. Another very lovely brooch is that which shows again a pendant of three pearls with the words "MI LADI PRINSIS," which reminds us that Holbein was not at home with his English to the last. Another has a very beautiful design of a lady's figure, the three pendent pearls again occurring, with the words "WELL LAYDI WELL." Another design shows roses treated in somewhat more naturalistic style than is usual with him, and again evidently prepared for completion with enamel.

Among the remaining designs are many for buttons, belt clasps, and other portions of male and female attire to be carried out in niello. There is an interesting seal for Charles Brandon, marked with the largeness which belongs to Holbein. One or two designs for bookbinding, the finest of which has on it the initials T. I. W., were perhaps prepared for Sir Thomas Wyatt. A drawing which suggests by its shape that it may have been intended for a lady's fan is also very beautiful. These may be enumerated to show the productive invention of the man in all directions, a productiveness of which we get a fairer idea when we remember that we probably possess an extremely small proportion of the designs which he made. Such designs were naturally placed in the hands of the jewellers who were to carry them out, and few, probably, ever saw Holbein's studio again.

The last design which we possess from Hans Holbein is preserved in the British Museum. It is a drawing for a timepiece which was eventually presented as a New Year's gift, on January 1, 1544, by Sir Anthony Denny to Henry VIII. Holbein did not live to see the completion of the work by the goldsmith. Some months before it reached the hands of Henry the great Enemy himself had called Time, and one more subject was added to the "Imagines Mortis" which Holbein had strangely omitted from his series, namely his illustration of Death and the Artist.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONCLUSION

IN bringing to a conclusion the life of Hans Holbein I do not propose to recapitulate at any great length the qualities, already so often dwelt upon in these pages, which have given to him his place in Art. That place is in a certain sense unique. It is always tempting and sometimes profitable to try to assign to a given painter his exact position in the ranks of the great ones. In the case of Holbein the endeavour would be curiously difficult as well as very interesting. His art stands so far apart from that of any other artist, so far apart even from that of his great countryman Dürer, that comparison becomes almost impossible. No man in Art ever stamped his own personality more strongly upon everything which he did. No man ever owed less to precedent and more to his own strong individuality. And this characteristic of the man was no doubt greatly fostered by the circumstances of his career—by his selection of two such places for the development of his personality as Basel and London, both of them, especially the latter, barren to a large extent of previous Art tradition. If fate had placed Holbein in his early youth in one of the great Italian centres, in Lombardy for example, just fresh from the influence of Leonardo, he would have been great, no doubt, for he could never have been otherwise, but he would have been great on the same lines as many another. As it was, though his selection of Basel for his sphere of work robbed him of great opportunities, which other cities where art patrons abounded might have afforded to him, it allowed his genius to unfold itself very much after its own choice. He remained German, it is true, working out his own individuality out of his early Augsburg training. But it gives no true description of the man to class him as of the German school or of any other school—he simply was Holbein.

No artist was ever better equipped by nature for his great task. To unerring accuracy of hand and eye he added the rare gift—especially rare in the men of his country—of unfaltering decision in his choice of what to see and what not to see; and with an inexhaustible patience, which took the form of inexhaustible delight in his work, he approached the most complicated feats of draughtsmanship with a courage and a gaiety which presently produced in him profound mastery of every technical resource of his craft, but never degenerated into mere facile dexterity. But these things

SIR HARRY GUILDFORD

WINDSOR CASTLE

Harry Guldeford Knight.



alone were not what give to Holbein his place in Art. That place is due to qualities of mind which no gifts of hand or eye can supply, which no artistic training nor industry nor devotion can secure to a man, namely, to greatness of style and to imagination of the highest order, qualities which dominate every work that came from his hand, from the little cuts of the "Alphabet of Death" to the fragment of the great cartoon of Whitehall. No man, indeed, ever possessed that indefinable gift of "style" in a greater degree, nor did it with him, as in the case of Dürer, take the form of mannerisms. You cannot say of the Windsor drawings, for example, that they show any mannerism, yet you would know that they could have been done by Holbein, and by Holbein only. They are in their possession of that same quality of "style" crowning examples amongst all the works of art that have ever been produced.

The work which Holbein has left for us to see is enough to justify us in placing him among the great ones. How much more we might have been able to say if it had been vouchsafed to us to see those great works which fate has so cruelly robbed us of, must be a question for our faith. Those who know the master best through his surviving works will be those who are the most ready to take the further greatness of Holbein upon trust. To what higher place within the sacred circle we might have been entitled to assign him can never be known to us. It must be enough for us to say that that circle would have to be contracted to very narrow limits indeed before it could exclude the name of Hans Holbein the Younger.

NOTE.—Since Chapter XV. was written Mr. W. F. Dicks has published his book on the "Ambassadors" (see Chapter XVI.). He believes that Holbein accepted the invitation of the Town Council of Basel (see Chapter XV.), and that he spent the greater part of the year 1533 in Basel and Germany, and not, as generally supposed, in England; and that most of the portraits of 1533 of the so-called Steelyard period were painted on the Continent, and not in London, in spite of the addresses legible on the George Gisze and other portraits. He relies mainly on an entry which he has found in the Basel Town Council account book under the date of November 23, 1533, which I quote from his book: "Item A° 1533, on Sunday before St. Katherine's day are these items here now entered [her noch geschriben] by the two guilds, Von Himmel and Von Sternen: First for flags and banners: for banners: for Hans Holbein the painter." Mr. Dicks urges that this entry proves the presence of Holbein in Basel in 1533. To myself it does not carry conviction. The singular wording of the entry "her noch geschriben" seems to suggest that the entry may be a first entry of previously omitted items. An accountant making an entry in the ordinary course of payment does not write "is here entered," but makes the entry without comment; on the other hand, if an entry has been overlooked and subsequently entered it is quite natural to write "is entered here" as an explanation of its irregular appearance. Again, even if it be an entry of a payment made in November, 1533, it need not have been made to Holbein himself, since his wife was still living in Basel, and the payment due to Hans would be made to Elsbeth in his absence. The appearance of these items in the Town Council books even makes them look like payments made to the guilds for the use on some occasion of their banners for a festive occasion, and the payment to Holbein possibly a royalty paid to him as designer of the said banners belonging to the guild "Zum Himmel."

SIR NICHOLAS CAREW

BASEL



APPENDIX

APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS BY HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER. THE DRAWINGS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS LIST

The pictures marked with a dagger (†) are reproduced in this volume

- | | |
|--|---|
| †1514. First dated work. THE MADONNA AND CHILD. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| †1515. SCOURGING OF CHRIST: one of a series of Passion pictures. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| †1516. JAKOB MEIER AND HIS WIFE. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| 1517-8. WALL PAINTINGS OF THE HERTENSTEIN HOUSE. | <i>Lucerne: now destroyed.</i> |
| †1519. PORTRAIT OF BONIFACIUS AMERBACH. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| 1520 (?). HOUSE OF THE DANCE. | <i>Basel: now destroyed.</i> |
| †1521. CHRIST IN THE SEPULCHRE. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| 1521—onwards. WALL PAINTINGS OF THE RATHAUS. | <i>Basel: now destroyed.</i> |
| †1522. MADONNA OF SOLOTHURN. | <i>Solothurn.</i> |
| 1522 (?). ALTAR PANELS IN THE CATHEDRAL. | <i>Freiburg.</i> |
| 1523 (?). PASSION PICTURE IN EIGHT COMPARTMENTS. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| †1523. PORTRAIT OF ERASMUS. | <i>Lowvre.</i> |
| †1523. PORTRAIT OF ERASMUS. | <i>The Earl of Radnor, Longford Castle.</i> |
| †1526 (?). MADONNA OF DARMSTADT. | <i>Darmstadt.</i> |
| A copy in the Dresden Gallery. | |
| †1527. WILLIAM WARHAM, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. | <i>Lowvre.</i> |
| Replica at Lambeth Palace. | |
| †1527. SIR HENRY GUILDFORD. | <i>Windsor Castle.</i> |
| †1527. SIR THOMAS MORE. | <i>Mr. Edward Huth.</i> |
| †1528. NICHOLAS KRATZER. | <i>Lowvre.</i> |
| 1528. THOMAS GODSALVE AND HIS SON. | <i>Dresden.</i> |
| 1528 (?). SIR BRIAN TUKE. | <i>Munich.</i> |
| †1528. ELSEBETH, WIFE OF HANS HOLBEIN, WITH TWO CHILDREN. | <i>Basel Museum.</i> |
| †1532. GEORGE GISZE, a Merchant of the Steelyard. | <i>Berlin.</i> |
| †1532. HANS OF ANTWERP (?), Jeweller. | <i>Windsor Castle.</i> |
| 1533. PORTRAIT OF A MAN OF THIRTY-FOUR YEARS OLD. | <i>Berlin.</i> |
| 1533. DERICH TYBIS. | <i>Vienna.</i> |
| †1533. DERICH BORN. | <i>Windsor Castle.</i> |
| †1533. ROBERT CHESEMAN HOLDING A HOODED FALCON. | <i>Hague.</i> |
| †1533. THE AMBASSADORS. | <i>National Gallery, London.</i> |
| 1533. THE TRIUMPH OF RICHES AND TRIUMPH OF POVERTY: Paintings in the Steelyard Hall. | <i>Now lost.</i> |

- †1534. THOMAS CROMWELL. *The Earl of Caledon, Tyttenhanger.*
 1536. SIR RICHARD SOUTHWELL. *Florence, Uffizi.*
 †A replica in the Louvre.
 1537. THE WALL PAINTINGS OF WHITEHALL: A portion of the cartoon preserved
 at Hardwick Hall. *Perished.*
 †1537. QUEEN JANE SEYMOUR. *Vienna.*
 †1537 (?). CHARLES SOLIER, Sieur de Morette. *Dresden.*
 †1538. CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, Duchess of Milan.
Lent to National Gallery, London.
 †1539. QUEEN ANNE OF CLEVES. *Louvre.*
 †1540 (?). THOMAS HOWARD, Duke of Norfolk. *Windsor Castle.*
 1542. DR. JOHN CHAMBERS. *Vienna.*
 1542. THE PRESENTATION OF THE CHARTER BY HENRY VIII. TO THE BARBER-
 SURGEONS: possibly on a design by Holbein.
Barber-Surgeons' Hall, London.

The Windsor series of drawings, over eighty in number, extend from 1527 to 1540.

JOHN MORE, SON OF SIR THOMAS MORE

WINDSOR CASTLE

John Mose S^r Thomas Mose, Son,



QUEEN ANNE BOLEYN (?)

WINDSOR CASTLE

Anna Bolleyn Queen.



LIST OF THE CHIEF WORKS OF HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLEC- TIONS OF EUROPE

THERE is great difficulty in compiling such a list, owing to the fact that the spurious works which have been attributed to the master, and still bear his name, are in so large a majority. The simplest method would doubtless have been to include all that are catalogued under his name, declining all responsibility. But such a method would have swelled this appendix to fully thrice its size, and would, in effect, have rendered the list valueless as an index to the true works of the master. Under these circumstances it has been necessary to make the selection more or less critical, and the following method has, after much consideration, been adopted. Wherever the author is able either by his inspection, or, in very rare instances, on the evidence of competent authority, to accept fully the genuineness of a picture, the title is printed in large type [*e.g.*, ERASMUS]. Wherever the author is not able, owing to the absence of both these means of assurance, to accept the ascription, and yet is not able to reject it, or where reasonable doubt still exists, the title is printed in smaller type [*e.g.*, ERASMUS], with or without a note. Paintings ascribed to the master which the author is compelled wholly to reject are for the most part omitted. But where they have been generally accepted hitherto, or where the question of their genuineness is of special interest with reference to the art of Holbein, they are printed in italics [*e.g.*, *Erasmus*], and usually with an appended note.

No attempt has been made in this appendix to catalogue the original drawings and designs of the master. In a few instances, however, of special interest, reference is made to them.

AUSTRIA.

VIENNA. Imperial Gallery.

- No. 1479. PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN. Half length. With black cap and short hair. A glove in his left hand, a book in his right. "ANNO. DNI 1541. ETATIS SUÆ 28." Panel. 47 cm. by 35 cm.
- No. 1480. PORTRAIT OF JOHN CHAMBERS, Physician to Henry VIII. Half length. Green background. "ÆTATIS SUÆ 88." Panel. 65 cm. by 48 cm.
- †No. 1481. PORTRAIT OF QUEEN JANE SEYMOUR. Half length. Grayish blue background. Panel. 63 cm. by 47 cm. Study at Windsor Castle.
- No. 1482. PORTRAIT OF A MAN (Ambras Collection). Apparently a servant of Henry VIII. Bust: in red costume, with the letters H.R. in gold embroidery on the breast. Blue background. "ETATIS SUÆ 30. ANNO 1534." Small circular panel. 12 cm.
- No. 1484. PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN (Ambras Collection). Companion to 1482. Bust: green background. "ETATIS SUÆ 28. ANNO 1534." Small circular panel. 12 cm.

AUSTRIA—continued.

- No. 1483. **PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN.** Half length. Green-blue background. In rich costume, with a gold band round the head. Panel. 22 cm. by 18 cm.
- No. 1485. **PORTRAIT OF DERICH TYBIS,** of Duisburg, a London merchant. Half length. Green-blue background. He holds a letter with his address upon it. On a paper an inscription stating that the picture was painted by Holbein in the year 1533, when Tybis was thirty-three years old. Panel. 48 cm. by 35 cm.

Schönborn Gallery.

- PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN.** Half length. Blue background. "ANNO 1532 ÆTATIS SUÆ 29" Panel. 40 cm. by 31 cm. The ring is said to show the same coat of arms as the portrait of a man at Berlin (q.v.), viz., of the Cornish family of Trelawney.

Liechtenstein Gallery.

THE PORTRAITS BEARING THE NAME OF HOLBEIN HAVE NO CLAIM TO THE TITLE.

PRAG. Rudolfinum.

- †**PORTRAIT OF LADY VAUX.** Half length. Blue-green background. In a dark brown dress trimmed with ermine. On her breast a gold medal, with St. Anne in enamel. Panel. 36 cm. by 27 cm.

A replica is at Hampton Court. Study in crayon at Windsor Castle.

BRITISH ISLES.

LONDON. National Gallery.

- †No. 1314. **"THE AMBASSADORS."** Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve. Full-length portraits of the two men standing on either side of a wooden stand, on the shelves of which are mathematical and musical instruments. Jean de Dinteville, Ambassador of France, is seen on the left of the picture in a rich costume, wearing a gold chain with the Order of St. Michael. On the right stands George de Selve, Bishop-designate of Lavaur, in a gown of mulberry colour with sable lining. In the foreground is a perspectively distorted image, or anamorphosis, of a human skull. Above the figures is hung as a background a rich green damask curtain. Oak panel in ten vertical planks. 6 ft. 10 in. by 6 ft. 10½ in.

For a different identification of the two persons represented see text.

No Number. Lent to the Nation by the Duke of Norfolk.

- †**CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, DUCHESS OF MILAN,** afterwards Duchess of Lorraine. Full length. Blue background. She wears a mourning robe trimmed with sable over a black satin dress: a black tightly-fitting hood upon her head. The hands are lightly touching one another. She wears a ruby ring. Panel. 5 ft. 10 in. by 2 ft. 8 in. Once in the collection of Henry VIII., for whom it was painted.

Wallace Collection.

- SMALL MINIATURE PORTRAIT OF HOLBEIN HIMSELF, 1543.** At the age of forty-five.

British Museum.

- In the Print Room will be found—A **DESIGN FOR A CHIMNEY:** (†) A **DESIGN FOR A CLOCK,** the last known drawing by Hans Holbein: **HENRY VIII. AT TABLE:** (†) **JOHN FISHER:** (†) **NUMEROUS DESIGNS** for daggers, bookbinding, niello, seals, medallions, clasps, and buttons: **JEWELLER'S DESIGNS** of many kinds: (†) **JANE SEYMOUR'S CUP** (not necessarily from Holbein's own hand): besides seven reversed editions from the Basel Passion Series for stained glass (see, however, text).

LADY MARY, AFTER QUEEN(?)

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Mary after Queen



SIR T. ELIOTT
WINDSOR CASTLE

W. Holt Knight



LADY ELIOTT
WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Eliot.



The Print Room contains also a magnificent collection of woodcuts designed by and attributed to Hans Holbein the younger and by Ambros Holbein (see also selected list of woodcuts at the end of this appendix).

National Gallery of Ireland.

SIR HENRY WYATT. Replica of the picture in the Louvre.

Windsor Castle.

- †SIR HENRY GUILDFORD, Master of the Horse to Henry VIII., 1527. Half length, life size. He wears the Order of St. George. A green hanging behind. "ANNO D MCCCCXXVII ETATIS SUÆ XLIX." Panel. 2 ft. 8½ in. by 2 ft. 2¼ in.
- †HANS OF ANTWERP (?), Goldsmith, 1532. Half length. Dark eyes, brown hair, and beard. Dark cap and clothes; a ring on his finger. Gray background. A letter contains his address. "ANNO DM 1532 AN. D. 26 JULII ETATIS SUÆ." Panel. 2 ft. by 1 ft. 6 in.
- †DERICH BORN (?), 1533. Half length. Black cap and dress. Blue ground, now darkened. A distich, with third line ending "DER BORN ETATIS SUÆ 23 ANNO 1533." Panel. 1 ft. 11½ in. by 1 ft. 6 in.
- †THOMAS HOWARD, third Duke of Norfolk, 1540 (?). Half length. In rich costume, with chain and insignia. Green background. "THOMAS DUKE OF NORFOLK AND TRESURER OFF INGLONDE THE LXVI YERE OF HIS AGE." Panel. 2 ft. 7 in. by 2 ft.

Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan.

This picture, a small bust portrait on panel, has been considered by some authorities to be the original sketch for the great portrait in the National Gallery. It is, however, obviously only a copy, and not by Holbein.

Dr. Stokesley, Bishop of London.

This picture, attributed to Holbein, is not by him.

†*Henry VIII.*, a copy of an original by Holbein.

MINIATURES IN THE LIBRARY.

1. HENRY BRANDON, five years old, eldest son of Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Blue ground. Round. Cardboard. "ETATIS SUÆ 5. 6. SEPDEM ANNO 1535."
2. CHARLES BRANDON, three years old, brother of above. Blue ground. Round. Ivory. "ANNO 1541 ETATIS SUÆ 3. 10 MARCI."
3. LADY AUDLEY. Round.
4. QUEEN CATHERINE HOWARD. Blue ground. Round. Eyes and hair brown. A pearl necklace. Rich pearl and gold embroidered dress.

Also in the Library. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA BEFORE SOLOMON. Washed drawing, with body colour and gold on a blue background with gold stars.

The set of over eighty original drawings by Hans Holbein the younger for portraits of the chief men and women about the Court of Henry VIII. is preserved in two portfolios in the King's Library, Windsor Castle.

Hampton Court.

LADY VAUX. Small bust, nearly full face. She wears a black dress trimmed with ermine: a hood about her head, trimmed with yellow, and edged with pearls. She holds a gillyflower. On her breast a brooch in gold and enamel, with the Madonna enthroned. Panel. 1 ft. 3 in. by 11¼ in. Study in crayon at Windsor Castle.

The picture is seriously obliterated by repainting; but is possibly an original Holbein and a replica of the portrait at Prag.

†JOHN RESKEMEER OF MURTHYR IN CORNWALL. Bust portrait in complete profile. Blue green background, with vine tendrils. He wears a long pointed beard. A black cap on his head: dark coat. Oak panel. 1 ft. 6½ in. by 1 ft. 1½ in.

†*John Froben*, Printer of Basel. Half length. Barcheaded. Wears a loose coat trimmed with fur,

BRITISH ISLES—*continued.*

Printer's materials before him on a table. "IONNES FROBENIUS TYP. HOLBEIN P." Panel. 1 ft. 9½ in. by 1 ft. 5½ in.

This picture, inserted among the illustrations of this book because of the connection of Froben with Holbein, is possibly by Holbein, but ruined by over-painting. The panel, originally smaller, has been subsequently added to.

†*Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre.* Panel. 2 ft. 6 in. by 3 ft. 2 in. Accepted by Zahn, Dr. J. P. Richter, and other authorities. Attributed to Barthol. Bruyn by Dr. Woltmann. Not accepted by the writer of this book.

Henry VII., Henry VIII., Elizabeth Woodville, Jane Seymour. An important little copy made by Rénee van Leemput in 1667, for Charles II., of the wall painting now perished in Whitehall. Never attributed to Holbein.

Of the many pictures which bear the name of Holbein at Hampton Court, no others need be considered.

OXFORD. Bodleian Library.

Contains the design for

JANE SEYMOUR'S CUP, of which the British Museum has a duplicate (†) not indisputably from the hand of Holbein.

LONDON. Barber's Hall.

Henry VIII. granting the Charter to the Barber-Surgeons'. Suffered severely by fire in the days of Pepys. Repainted. Possibly begun by Holbein and finished by other hands.

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS IN ENGLAND.

ALTHORP, Northamptonshire. Earl Spencer.

SMALL BUST OF HENRY VIII. Blue ground.

This portrait is declared by Mr. Lionel Cust to be a genuine portrait of Henry VIII. by Holbein. Waagen expresses a doubt as to the identity. Woltmann accepts it.

ARUNDEL CASTLE. Duke of Norfolk.

†CHRISTINA OF DENMARK. [See National Gallery.]

CHATSWORTH. Duke of Devonshire.

The Wheel of Fortune. An allegorical picture with figures and rhyming inscriptions in old German. On the part which supports the wheel of Fortune are the arms of Basel, with the date 1533 and the monogram of the painter. Painted in distemper on canvas, 27 in. by 18 in. Described by Waagen as undoubtedly genuine. Described by Mr. S. Arthur Strong in the "Chatsworth Drawings," and there attributed to Schüefelein. Not accepted by the author as by Holbein.

In the collection at Chatsworth is a frame containing six small round designs for goldsmith's work by Holbein.

HARDWICK HALL. Duke of Devonshire.

†HENRY VIII. AND HIS FATHER HENRY VII. Full length. Life size. Portion of the cartoon for the great wall painting in Whitehall, now perished. Charcoal: on paper, mounted on canvas. Pricked for transfer. 7 ft. by 4½ ft.

DALKEITH CASTLE. Duke of Buccleuch.

SIR NICHOLAS CAREW, Master of the Horse to Henry VIII. (this title and inscription appear on the picture). Panel. 36 in. by 40 in.

The sketch (†) is at Basel.

DOUGHTY HOUSE. Sir F. Cook.

MINIATURE OF THOMAS WRIOTHESLY, Earl of Southampton.

LORD VAUX
WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lord Vaux.





LADY VAUX
WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Vaux.



SIR JOHN GODSALVE

WINDSOR CASTLE

S^t John Gualberto



Mr. T. FREWEN.

LADY GUILDFORD, of Hemstead, Kent, wife of Sir Henry Guildford. Half figure. Embroidered triangular headdress, with black veil. She holds a book and a rosary. Blue background with vine leaves. "ANNO MDXXVII ÆTATIS SUÆ 27." Panel. 32 in. by 26 in.

GROSVENOR HOUSE. Duke of Westminster.

SIR BRIAN TUKE. Half figure. Green background. Wears a gold chain and cross. A pair of gloves in the left hand. "BRIANUS TUKE MILES ANNO ÆTATIS SUÆ LVIII." Panel. 18½ in. by 14½ in.

This portrait is without the skeleton which appears in the Munich version of the same portrait.

Mr. EDWARD HUTH.

†SIR THOMAS MORE. Half length. Life size. A green curtain behind. "MDXXVII." Panel. The sketch for the picture is in the Windsor Series.

LAMBETH PALACE.

WILLIAM WARHAM, Archbishop of Canterbury. Half length. Life size. He is dressed in his robes of office. Both hands visible. Gold-brown background. "ANNO MDXXVII. ETATIS SUE LXX." On the cross at his left the words "AUXILIUM MEUM A DEO." Panel. 32 in. by 26 in.

Replica of the picture in the Louvre (†), with slight variation. The original sketch (†) in the Windsor Collection. Two more repetitions at Lambeth.

MR. LOCKER LAMPSON.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN in silver point, miniature size, signed "Hans Holbein, 1543."

LONGFORD CASTLE. The Earl of Radnor.

†ERASMUS. Half length. Background of Renaissance pilasters with hangings. His hair is slightly gray. He wears a dark cap and pelisse fur-trimmed. His hands rest upon a book bound in red, on which is the date "MDXXIII." Panel. 30 in. by 22 in.

The study for the hands (†) is in the Louvre.

MONTAGU HOUSE. Duke of Buccleuch.

MINIATURE OF HANS HOLBEIN by himself, in black hat and doublet. 3½ in. diameter. Inscribed, "H.H. AE 45. A 1543."

MINIATURE OF HANS HOLBEIN by himself. He is dressed in black, and holds a pencil in his hand. 2½ in. diameter. Inscribed, "H.H. AN 1543 ÆTATIS SUÆ 45." From the Walpole Collection at Strawberry Hill.

MINIATURE OF HENRY VIII. in a black flat cap trimmed with white fur. He wears a gray dress puffed with white: a crimson mantle. 2½ in. diameter. Enclosed in a box on which are the arms of Charles I.

MR. J. P. MORGAN.

MINIATURE OF LORD HENRY STAFFORD.

MINIATURE OF CHARLES BRANDON, DUKE OF SUFFOLK, in plain black coat and cap, thinly painted. From the Walpole Collection at Strawberry Hill.

PETWORTH. Lord Leconfield.

DERICH BERCK, London merchant. Half figure. Black dress. At a table. He holds a letter addressed to himself: a piece of paper has the words "olim meminisse juvabit," and there is an inscription "AN: 1536. æt. 30." Panel. 20 in. by 16 in.

Mr. POLE CAREW.

SIR WILLIAM BUTTS. Bust. Blue-green background. "ANNO ÆTATIS SUÆ LIX." Panel. 18 in. by 14 in.

LADY BUTTS. Companion picture to above. "ANNO ÆTATIS SUÆ LVII." Panel. 18 in. by 14 in. Sketch for Lady Butts (†) at Windsor Castle.

BRITISH ISLES—*continued*.

PROPERT COLLECTION (at one time).

MINIATURE OF JANE SEYMOUR ON VELLUM, once in the Strawberry Hill and Bale Collections.

SION HOUSE. Duke of Northumberland.

EDWARD VI. AS PRINCE OF WALES. Panel. 51 in. by 29 in. (Accepted by Woltmann.)

TYTTENHANGER. Earl of Caledon.

†THOMAS CROMWELL. Half length, looking sideways. A book before him has the inscription, "To our trusty and right well beloved Counsailler Thomas Cromwell Maister of our Jewel house." Also a later laudatory inscription in four lines. Panel. 30 in. by 24 in. Seriously repainted, especially the head.

WILTON HOUSE. The Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery.

Sir John More. Half figure. Black cap, fur-lined coat. Holds a letter. Dark background, with two ornamental figures above. Panel. 29 in. by 24 in. (Not accepted by author.)

The very fine drawing (†) known as Thomas Cromwell is at Wilton House.

WOBURN ABBEY. The Duke of Bedford.

PORTRAIT OF SIR JOHN RUSSELL. Panel.

Study in Windsor Castle.

FRANCE.

PARIS. Louvre.

†NICHOLAS KRATZER, Astronomer to Henry VIII. Half length. A paper on a table has the words, "Imago ad vivam effigiem expressa Nicolai Kratzeri monacensis qui bavarus erat quadragessimus annus tempore illo complebat 1528." Panel. 0.83 by 0.67.

†WILLIAM WARHAM, Archbishop of Canterbury. Half length. In his robes. A cross at his right hand. A bishop's mitre above his left. Green background (the Lambeth replica has brown). Panel. 0.82 by 0.66.

†ERASMUS. Half length. Profile. He is writing at a desk. Dark cap and coat with a fur trimming. Green figured curtain behind the head. Painted in 1523. Panel. 0.42 by 0.32.

SIR HENRY WYATT (formerly described as Sir Thomas More). Bust. Green background. Panel. 0.39 by 0.31.

†QUEEN ANNE OF CLEVES, fourth wife of Henry VIII. Half length. Blue ground. In rich costume. On vellum, laid down upon canvas. 0.65 by 0.48.

SIR RICHARD SOUTHWELL. Panel. 0.47 by 0.33.

A replica of the finer portrait in the Uffizi, Florence.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN. Bust. Panel. 0.42 by 0.33.

The Louvre possesses the original sketch for the TRIUMPH OF RICHES (formerly in the Hall of the Steelyard, London). Two studies for the hands of Erasmus. A study for a house front at Basel, etc., etc.

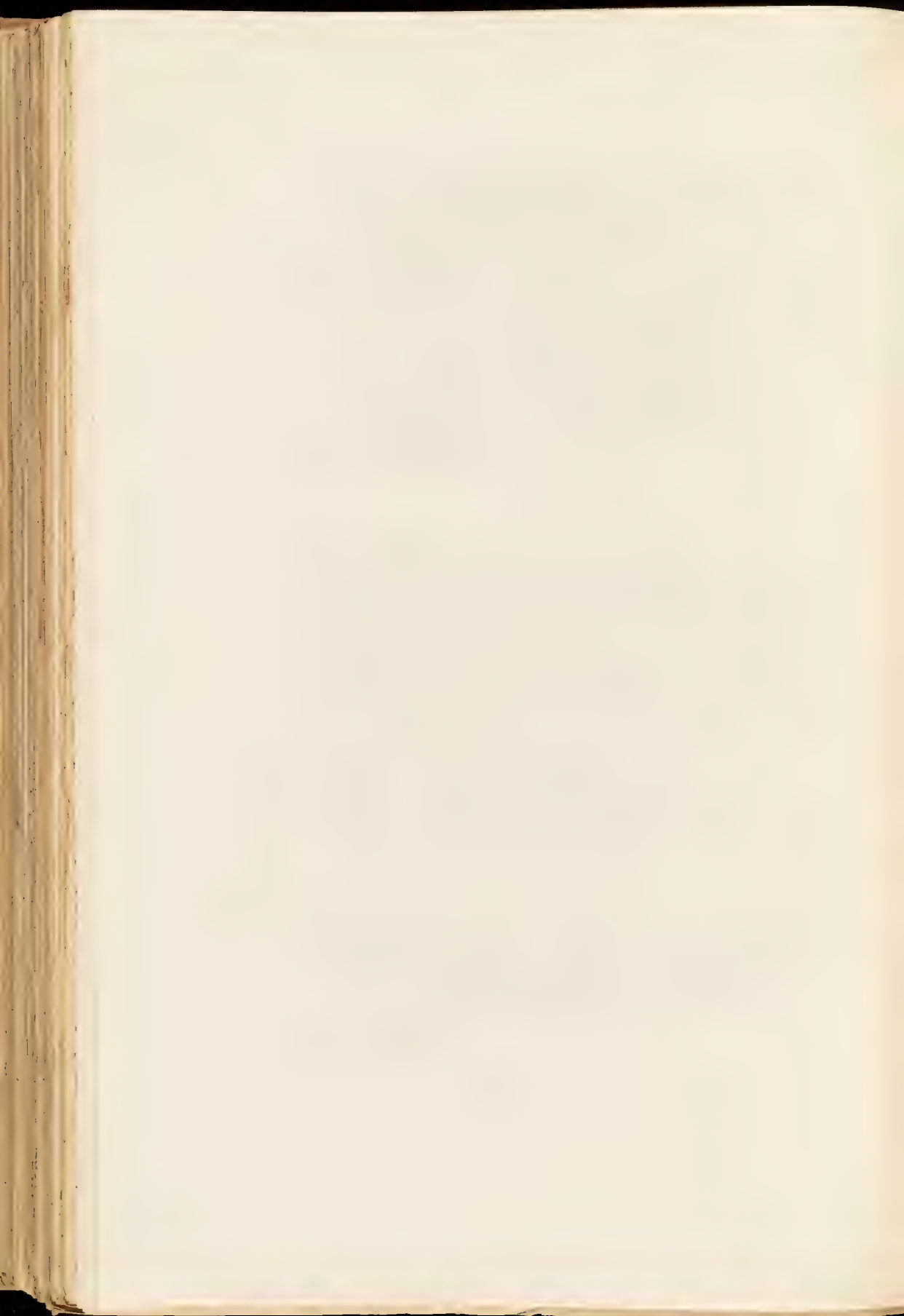
GERMANY.

BERLIN. Museum.

†GEORG GISZE, Merchant of the London Steelyard. Half length. He is placed in a small office, whose shelves are covered with books and papers. Upon them hang gold rings, keys, scissors, string holders, etc. "G. GISZE" on the left wall, "Nulla sine merore voluptas." A distich. "Anno ætatis suæ XXXIII Anno dom 1532." Panel. 0.96 by 0.84.

JOHN POYNS OF ESSEX

WINDSOR CASTLE



Jean Pontes.



LADY LISTER

WINDSOR CASTLE



LADY AUDLEY

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady

And 57.



LADY BUTTS

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Bnts.



PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN. Half turned to the left. Bust. Gray-blue ground. He wears a dark cap and dress. A glove in his folded hands. "ANNO 1541 ETATIS SUÆ 37." On his left hand a ring, with the arms of the family of Vos van Steenwijk in Holland. Panel. 0.47 by 0.36.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN. Bust. Full face. Blue ground. He is dressed in a dark cap and a mantle drooping over the left shoulder. A glove in his left hand. "ANNO 1533. ETATIS SUÆ 39." On his left hand a ring, with the arms of the Cornish family of Trelawney, as in the portrait of the Schönborn Gallery, Vienna. Panel. 0.39 by 0.30.

PORTRAIT OF AN ELDERLY MAN. Turned half sideways to the right. Bust. Gray-blue ground. Dark cap with gold ornament. Red under sleeves. "ÆTATIS SUÆ 54." Panel. 0.51 by 0.37.

Formerly in possession of Sir John E. Millais.

The Berlin Museum Print Cabinet possesses a sketch for part of the façade of (†) THE HOUSE OF THE DANCE (now demolished) at Basel. A DESIGN FOR A COAT OF ARMS SUPPORTED BY TWO LANDSKNECHTEN. A drawing touched with colour of an (†) ENGLISHMAN with a black beard. A SITTING LANDSKNECHT: life study, etc. Also a rich collection of woodcuts.

BRUNSWICK. Picture Gallery.

AMBROS OR CYRIAC FALLON. "INALS GEDOLTIG ANNO SINS ALTERS. 32. 1533." Panel. 0.60 by 0.45. Much injured by repainting.

CASSEL. Royal Picture Gallery.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN RICHLY DRESSED. Half length. Blue ground. Panel. 0.40 by 0.31. Accepted by Waagen.

DARMSTADT. Palace.

†THE MADONNA OF THE MEIER FAMILY. Mary with the Child stands in a niche. At her left and right kneel the members of the Meier family. Blue sky seen at the side of the niche. Panel. 1.44 by 1.01.

Studies for Jakob Meier, Dorothea Kannengiesser, and their daughter at Basel. A good old (†) copy at Dresden.

Man's Portrait, with inscription "HH. 1515." Not accepted by the author. Perhaps the work of Ambros Holbein.

DRESDEN. Picture Gallery.

THOMAS GODSALVE AND HIS SON JOHN. Half length. On one panel. Blue background. "Thomas Godsalue de Norwico Etatis suæ quadragesimo septimo. Anno Dni MDXXVIII." Panel. 0.35 by 0.35.

†Study for the son at Windsor.

†CHARLES SOLIER, THE SIEUR DE MORETTE, Ambassador of France in London. Half length. Full face. Background, a green hanging. He wears a rich black dress, with gold chain and richly decorated dagger. A hat looped with gold thread and pearl, and carrying a medallion; slashed sleeves. Panel. 0.92 by 0.75. Formerly described as a portrait of Lodovico Sforza by Leonardo da Vinci. For a short time considered to be Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Afterwards called Hubert Morett, jeweller to Henry VIII.

The original sketch (†) hangs in the same room.

An old Copy of the Darmstadt Madonna, probably by a Netherlandish artist, which hangs in the same room as the "Sieur de Morette," passed for many years as the original work by Holbein. (See text.)

GERMANY—continued.

FRANKFURT. Stadel Institute.

SIMON GEORGE OF CORNWALL. Bust. Profile. Green-blue ground. Richly clad with embroidered shirt showing. A hat with a white feather and a medallion representing Leda and the Swan. "NOB: A. JOHA: H." Panel. 0.30 by 0.24.

Original sketch at Windsor.

The Stadel Institute possesses a very fine drawing of a ship putting to sea.

FREIBURG IM BREISGAU. Universitäts Capelle of the Münster.

Two wings of an altar-piece painted for the Burgher of Basel, Hans Oberriedt, and subsequently moved to their present position.

1. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
2. THE WORSHIP OF THE SHEPHERDS. } Panels, each 2.38 by 1.09.

HANOVER. Royal Picture Gallery.

EDWARD VI. AS PRINCE OF WALES. Half figure. Life size. Green-blue ground. Painted in 1538. Eight lines of verse by Richard Morysin. Panel. 0.57 by 0.44.

Study at Windsor.

PHILIP MELANCTHON. A small round panel. 0.09 by 0.12. Repainted.

KARLSRUHE. Picture Gallery.

1. *St. Ursula*. Panel. 0.99 by 0.40. Inscription in black on right hand under corner, "HANS HOLBEIN MDXXII." (Not accepted by the author of this book.)
2. *St. George*. Companion to the above. (Not accepted by the author of this book.)

MUNICH. Pinakothek.

SIR BRIAN TUKE, Lord Treasurer to Henry VIII. (see also Grosvenor House, London).

With a skeleton standing in rear. On the table a Bible, with the words "Hiob. cap 10. 20."

Signed "IO. HOLPAIN." Panel. 0.39 by 0.51. Much injured and restored.

DERICH BORN (see also Windsor Castle). "DE . . BOR: TATIS SUÆ MDXXX." Miniature on paper. Oval. 0.08 by 0.06.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN. Half length. Blue ground. Brown hair: dark cap. Holds a paper in his left hand. "ANA 1536 ÆTA: 30." Panel. 0.53 by 0.42.

In the Print Room is exhibited the (†) original drawing for THE HEAD OF HENRY VIII.

HOLLAND.

HAGUE. Mauritshuis.

†ROBERT CHESEMAN, of Dormanswell, England. Half length. Full face. Blue ground. He holds on his left hand, gloved, a young peregrine falcon. "ROBERTUS CHESEMAN ETATIS SUÆ XLVIII. ANNO Dñi MDXXXIII." Oak panel. 0.59 by 0.625.

Formerly called the "Falconer to Henry VIII." Once in the possession of William III. and Queen Anne, by whom it was sold.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN [The Man with the hawk]. Bust. Full face, short hair, full beard. He wears a black velvet dress with red shoulders. On his left hand, gloved, a falcon. Inscription partly obliterated, "15? 42? ANNO ETATIS SUÆ XXVIII."

Portrait of a Young Woman (sometimes called the wife of Holbein). Half length, turning to the left. Green-blue background. She wears a white coif: a black dress: laced bodice. Oak panel. 0.45 by 0.34.

Formerly in the collection of Charles I., and then attributed to Leonardo da Vinci. It has since passed under other names. Much disputed: not accepted by the author of this book.

Collection of Queen Wilhelmina. A MINIATURE OF A YOUNG MAN looking to his own left. Recognized in 1902 by Mr. R. R. Holmes as a work by Holbein, and by him described in the "Burlington Magazine" of April, 1903. Probably of the Steelyard period.

LADY MONTEGLE

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Montegle.



LADY RATCLIF

WINDSOR CASTLE

The Lady Ratclif.





LADY HEVENINGHAM, CALLED HENEGHAM

WINDSOR CASTLE

The L. / Henegham.



ITALY.

FLORENCE. Uffizi Gallery.

SIR RICHARD SOUTHWELL. Half length. Green background. "X° JULII ANNO H. VIII. XXVIII° ETATIS SUÆ. ANNO XXXIII." Panel. 0.47 by 0.36.

A replica (†) in the Louvre.

The other portraits in the Uffizi and Pitti Galleries attributed to Holbein need not be considered.

PARMA. Gallery.

ERASMUS. Half length. Three-quarter face. In fur-lined cape with dark cap. His hands on an open book. The date "1530" (not necessarily original). Panel. 0.25 by 0.338. Accepted as a genuine Holbein by Dr. J. P. Richter and other authorities.

PORTUGAL.

Royal Collection.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE. Panel. 2.13 by 1.83. Quoted by Woltmann, who had not seen it. The author has not obtained any first-hand opinion on this work.

RUSSIA.

ST. PETERSBURG. The Hermitage.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN. Half length. In a background of rich Renaissance buildings.

His right hand on a dagger. "ÆTATIS SUÆ XX MDXVIII." Panel. 0.43 by 0.32.

Perhaps a fine instance of the art of Ambros Holbein.

SPAIN.

MADRID. Gallery of the Prado.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN with a large nose. Half length. Probably a servitor in the Court of Henry VIII. Panel.

SWITZERLAND.

BASEL.

The nucleus of this most important collection of Holbein's early works was the Amerbach Collection, originally formed by Bonifacius Amerbach during Holbein's lifetime, catalogued subsequently by Basilius Amerbach, and in 1661 acquired by the municipality of Basel. The collection was largely augmented by the bequest of Dr. Remigius Fäsch (or Fesch) in 1670.

In this list works from the Amerbach Collection have the letters B A after the subject, those from the Fäsch (or Fesch) Collection have R F.

†MADONNA AND CHILD in a Renaissance frame, with frieze of putti. Three-quarter length. Dated MDXIII. It has the arms of Johann von Botzheim and Anna Ycher of Beringen. Panel. 0.31 by 0.30.

The first known painting by the Master.

THE LAST SUPPER (B A).

CHRIST IN PRAYER.

†THE ARREST OF CHRIST.

†THE HANDWASHING OF PILATE.

†THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST (B A).

} Five coarsely-painted subjects, on rough canvas, from the joint studio of Ambros and Hans Holbein. For the author's opinion, see text.

SWITZERLAND—*continued.*

A SCHOOLMASTER'S SIGNBOARD (sawn in two to show both sides), 1516. Panel. 0.54 by 0.64 (B A).

†ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM. Half length. Three-quarter face looking to his right. Round panel. 0.10 diameter (B A).

HEAD OF A SAINT. On blue ground. Panel. 0.23 by 0.21 (B A).

HEAD OF A VIRGIN. On blue ground. Panel. 0.23 by 0.21 (B A). Suffered from early repainting. Both these are so heavily repainted as to be, in the author's opinion, no longer discernible as the work of the Master.

†DOUBLE PORTRAIT IN ONE FRAME OF THE BURGOMASTER JAKOB MEIER ZUM HASEN AND HIS WIFE DOROTHEA KANNENGIESSER. Half lengths. Renaissance background, with blue sky. 1516. Panel. 0.38 by 0.30 (R F).

LAST SUPPER. Panel. 1.15 by 0.96 (B A).

Much injured by various alterations in the panel and early repaintings.

ADAM AND EVE. Busts. 1517. On paper fixed upon panel. 0.31 by 0.36 (B A).

Much injured by early repainting, possibly when fixed upon the panel.

†CHRIST AS THE MAN OF SORROWS; AND THE VIRGIN MARY. Two panels in one frame. Brown monochrome, with blue sky. Each panel, 0.28 by 0.19 (B A).

THE PASSION OF CHRIST in eight compartments united in one frame. Panel. 1.49 by 1.49 (B A). Much disputed: accepted by the author as probably a design by Holbein entirely painted over by another hand at an early date.

†CHRIST IN THE TOMB. "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum." Monogram and date, 1521. Panel. 0.30 by 2.0 (B A).

†BONIFACIUS AMERBACH. On the trunk of a tree hangs a panel with two Latin couplets and the inscription, "Bon Amorbacchium Jo Holbein depingebat A.M.D. XIX prid eid Octobr" (14 October, 1519). Panel. 0.28 by 0.28 (B A).

ERASMUS WRITING. Half length. Looking to his right. Paper fixed upon panel. 0.36 by 0.30 (B A).

Dorothea Offenburg, as *Lais Corinthia*. Half length. A green curtain behind. Has on the stone balcony on which she leans the words "LAIS CORINTHIA." Panel. 0.35 by 0.26 (B A).

†*Dorothea Offenburg*, as *Venus* with a *Cupid*. Half length. Panel. 0.33 (B A).

These two pictures are much disputed. In the opinion of the author they are works by a Lombard painter. See text.

PORTRAIT OF A LONDON MERCHANT in fur-lined cloak. Half length. Panel. 0.32 by 0.26.

The Museum of Basel possesses six oil paintings by Ambros Holbein. It possesses also a large collection of original drawings by Hans Holbein the father, by Ambros Holbein, and by Hans Holbein the younger. The drawings by the latter are over seventy in number. They include the original studies (†) for JAKOB MEIER, (†) HIS WIFE, and (†) HIS DAUGHTER. (†) THE FAMILY OF SIR THOMAS MORE. For (†) SIR NICHOLAS CAREW, etc., etc. (†) A PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER. DRAWINGS FOR HOUSE FAÇADES AND WALL PAINTINGS. BETWEEN TWENTY AND THIRTY DESIGNS for stained glass. DESIGNS for goldsmith's and jeweller's work, and a magnificent collection of woodcuts, among which are a proof set of the "DANCE OF DEATH": unique proof set of the OLD TESTAMENT SERIES: an unique proof of "CHRIST FALLING BENEATH THE CROSS," etc., etc.

LUCERNE.

Fragments of the wall decorations of the Hertenstein House, which were built into the walls of a stable when the house was destroyed.

SOLOTHURN. Gallery.

†THE MADONNA OF SOLOTHURN. The Virgin Mary and the Holy Child between St. Ursus and St. Martin. Panel. 1.41 by 1.02.

Seriously injured by neglect and repainting.

ZURICH. Town Library.

TABLE PAINTED IN 1515 FOR HANS BER. Has monogram and name "HANS HO." Repainted.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN


BERLIN PRINT ROOM



PORTRAIT OF AN ENGLISH LADY

BASEL





THE VIRGIN AND CHILD. STUDY ON GRAY PAPER

BASEL



DESIGN FOR A CHIMNEYPiece

BRITISH MUSEUM



LOST WORKS

The following are the most important of the works of Holbein which are known to have existed and have been lost :

The wall painting at Whitehall of Henry VIII., Henry VII., and Queen Jane Seymour and Elizabeth Woodville. Destroyed by fire 1698.

Portion of the cartoon at Hardwick Hall. Small copy at Hampton Court.

The Triumph of Poverty and the Triumph of Riches. Two large canvases painted for the Hall of the Guild of the Hanseatic Merchants (the Steelyard), London. Last heard of in Paris in 1670.

Original sketch for the Triumph of Riches in the Louvre.

The paintings of the House of the Dance at Basel. Destroyed in the eighteenth century.

Original sketch (†) in Berlin Print Room.

The paintings of the Hertenstein House at Lucerne. Painted in 1517. Destroyed, 1824.

Some small fragments preserved. Unsatisfactory copies at Lucerne and Basel.

The paintings of the Council Chamber in the Rathaus, Basel, 1522-1530.

Original sketches for the Rehoboam, Samuel and Saul, and Sapor and Valerian are in Basel Museum.

The Family of Sir John More.

Original sketch (†) in Basel Museum.

Many portraits can be proved to have existed through engravings or notices in various writers.

A FEW OF THE PRINCIPAL WOODCUTS DESIGNED BY HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER

PICTURES OF DEATH, commonly called THE DANCE OF DEATH. 1st edition, with forty-one woodcuts, published by Kaspar and Melchior Trechsel, Lyons, 1538. 4°. 5th Lyons edition, with fifty-three woodcuts, published by John Frellon. 1545.

(†) Proof sets printed probably before 1526 of forty prints (lacking the "Astronomer").

British Museum (once in Ottley's Collection).

Basel Museum (once in the Amerbach Collection).

Karlsruhe. Print Cabinet.

Berlin. Print Cabinet (once in the Nagler Collection).

Vienna. Albertina Collection (lacks also the "Preacher").

Paris. National Library.

A second set, from the Mitchell Collection in the British Museum, lacks several prints, which have been supplied from a later edition.

An incomplete set of twelve prints also at Berlin.

An incomplete set of thirty at Dresden.

Seven prints in the Bodleian at Oxford.

An incomplete set of thirty-five with the "Astronomer" at Paris.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. 1st edition, with ninety-one woodcuts, issued at Lyons by Kaspar and Melchior Trechsel, 1538. 4°. The same illustrations employed in subsequent editions.

(† selections.) An unique set of proofs in Basel Museum.

ALPHABET OF THE DANCE OF DEATH. Proof sets in the Print Cabinets of the (†) British Museum, Basel Museum, and Dresden, with small label containing the signature of "Hans Lützelburger formschnider genant Franck."

A set in the Print Cabinet of Karlsruhe lacks this label.

WOODCUTS—*continued.*

PEASANT ALPHABET. Proof sets at Basel and Dresden, etc.

CHRIST THE TRUE LIGHT. Proof at Basel and Berlin, etc.

THE SALE OF INDULGENCES. Proofs at the British Museum, Basel, Berlin, etc.

†FRAME WORK OF CHILDREN AND AMORINI: TRITONS BELOW. Above, two labels with the name "HANS HOLB." Used as the dedication page to SIR THOMAS MORE'S "UTOPIA," Froben, Basel, 1518. To the "Breve Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Leonis X ad Desiderium Erasmum" (probably designed late in 1515, and issued early in 1516), "Erasmi Paraphr: in Epistolam S. Pauli ad Gal.," Basel, Froben, 1519 and seven other works.

This page is an important instance of a design by Holbein which has fallen into the hands of an inferior woodcutter (see text, p. 187, on this subject).

DAS GANTZ NEUW TESTAMENT recht gründlich Teutsch (eight woodcuts). Adam Petri, Basel, 1523.

CHRIST FALLEN UNDER THE CROSS. An unique proof in Basel Museum.

CRANMER'S CATECHISM (three woodcuts). Printed by Nicolaus Hyll, London, 1548.

THE UNFAITHFUL SHEPHERD. Title-page signed "Hans Holben" for a book by "Dr. Urbanus Regius." Printed at Byllyngsgate by Walter Lynne, 1548.

ERASMUS IN A NICHE WITH TERMINUS ("Erasmus Rotterdamus in cim Ghüs."—Amerbach Inventory). Issued as title-page to "Erasmi omnia opera, etc. Hieron: Froben. Basel. 1540." Proof impressions, with only two lines of inscription, in British Museum, Munich Print Cabinet, Berlin Print Cabinet, etc.

ERASMUS. Small round medallion portrait, "ERASMUS ROTERODAM" on the circular frame. Used in the title-page of the "Adagia" of Erasmus, edition of 1533. Froben, Basel. Again in "Ecclesiastæ," etc., etc., by Erasmus. Froben, Basel, 1535.

PORTRAIT OF NICOLAUS BOURBON, poet, 1535.

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL. With the signs of the four evangelists beneath, 1523. Served as a title-page for "Das Neuw Testament. Basel. A. Petri," "Eusebius. Pamph: Basel. A Petri," "Ptolemaei Geographia," 1546, etc.

THE SAME, SMALLER. Title-page to "Das Neuw Testament recht gründlich Teutsch. Adam Petri, Basel, MDXXXIII."

THE ARMS OF FREIBURG IM BREISGAU, WITH THE VIRGIN MARY between St. Lambert and St. George on the reverse side. Title-page and frontispiece for the statutes of Freiburg.

SCAEVOLA AND PORSENNA. Used in the title-page of "Aeneae Platonici de immortalitate animae. Froben, Basel, 1516"; Erasmus "Christiani Matrimonii Institutio. Basel, 1518"; Sir T. More's "Utopia," 1518, etc.

THE PICTURE OF CEBES. Served as a title-page to "Tertulliani omnia Opera. Froben, Basel, 1521"; Erasmus, New Testament. Froben, Basel, 1521; "Cornucopiae . . . Latinae Linguae, 1532"; Lexicon Graeco Latinum. Basel, 1541, etc.

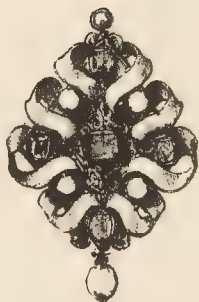
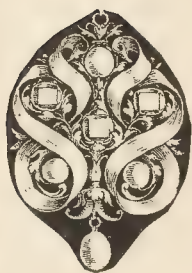
PEASANTS PURSUING A FOX. A small headpiece, or tailpiece, used in several publications.

†COVERDALE'S BIBLE. Title-page. London, MDXXXV and MDLI.

Printer's marks for T. WOLFF, JOHANN BEBELIUS (called Palma Bebel), CHRISTOPHER FROSCHOVER, etc.

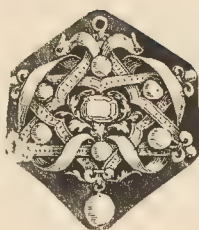
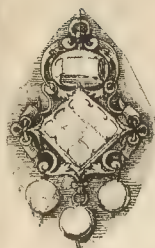
SIX DESIGNS FOR JEWELS

BRITISH MUSEUM

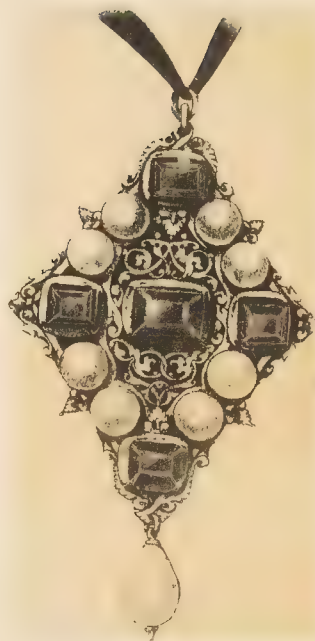


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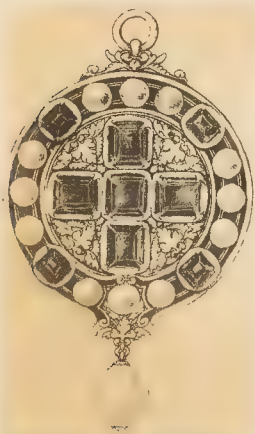
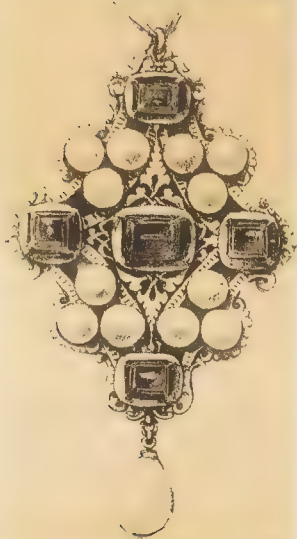


TWO DESIGNS FOR JEWELS
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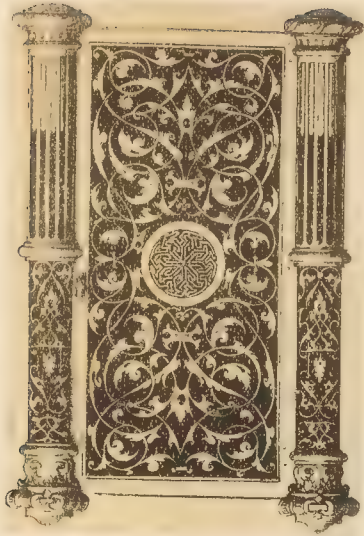
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TWO DESIGNS FOR BOOK-COVERS

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TWO DESIGNS FOR BOOK-COVERS

BRITISH MUSEUM



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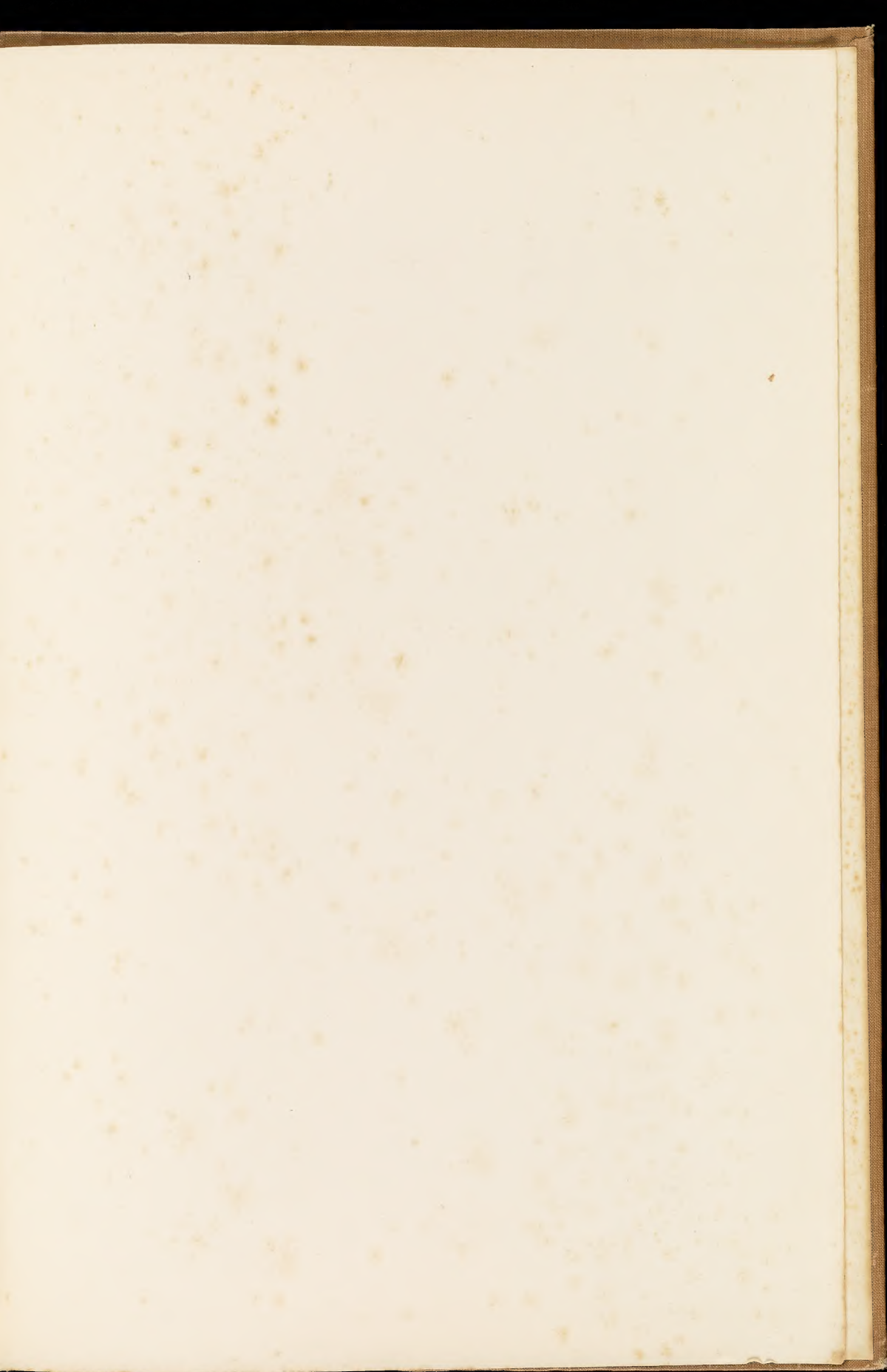
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